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## Why your eyes really go red in the swimming pool: Researchers warn URINE not chlorine causes reaction

- Half of Americans incorrectly believe chemical is pollute turns urine coloured
- 71% incorrectly blame chlorine for causing swimmers' eyes to become red

By [Mark Prigg For Dailymail.com](http://www.dailymail.com)

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Red eyes are something most swimmers have experienced in a pool.

However, although it is usually based on the amount of chlorine in the water, researchers have warned the reality is far less appealing.

They say the real cause is urine in the pool.

### THE COLOUR CHANGE MYTH

It's the most common pool myth of all time: If you pee in the pool, the water will change color and everyone will know.

Parents have long used the story of a chemical that changes color in the presence of pee to keep their children from peeing in the pool.

The fact is there is no such dye that currently exists, researchers say.

Health experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Water Quality and Health Council and the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF) say the problem of people urinating in pools is so bad they've launched a new campaign to educate people.

According to a new survey conducted by Survata on behalf of the Water Quality and Health Council, nearly half of Americans surveyed incorrectly believe that there is a chemical that is added to pools that turns a conspicuous color in the presence of pee.

In the same survey, 71 percent also incorrectly blame chlorine for causing swimmers' eyes to become red and irritated.

'Chlorine and other disinfectants are added to a swimming pool to destroy germs.

'Peeing in a pool depletes chlorine and actually produces an irritant that makes people's eyes turn red,' said Michele Hlavsa, chief of CDC's Healthy Swimming Program.

'The solution isn't rocket science; it's common courtesy.

'Swimmers should use the pool to swim, the restroom to pee and the showers to wash up before getting in the pool.

'It's that simple.'

'There isn't a dye that turns red.

'It's the eyes that turn red.

'Swimmers' eyes are the real color indicator that someone might have peed in a pool,' said Thomas M. Lachocki, CEO of the NSPF.

'That 'chlorine' smell at the pool isn't actually chlorine.

'What you smell are chemicals that form when chlorine mixes with pee, sweat and dirt from swimmers' bodies,' said Chris Wiant, Chair of the Water Quality and Health Council.

'These chemicals – not chlorine – can cause your eyes to become red and sting, make your nose run and make you cough.'

When nitrogen-containing compounds found in pee, sweat and dirt combine with chlorine, irritants are formed.

These substances, not the chlorine itself, irritate the eyes, skin and respiratory system. In this case, more chlorine may actually need to be added to pool water to break down irritants, according to the Water Quality and Health Council.

Lachocki added that swimming keeps us happy and healthy.

The CDC and the American Chemistry Council also have collaborated on a brochure that includes key messages about healthy swimming, which include showering before swimming and not peeing in a pool.

# The Washington Post

## Scientists describe the gross reason why your eyes sometimes sting, turn red in swimming pools

By [Ariana Eunjung Cha](#) June 25, 2015

Like many people who swim in the summer, you might have assumed it's the chlorine that makes your eyes so red in pools.

That's not exactly true, the Centers for Disease Control says in its annual healthy swimming report. It turns out the cause is actually urine binding with chlorine to turn into something called a chloramine. In addition to being an eye irritant, chloramine, a derivative of ammonia, has been linked to respiratory problems among some swimmers.

"When we go swimming and we complain that our eyes are red, it's because swimmers have peed in the water," Michele Hlavsa, chief of CDC's healthy swimming program, told ["Today."](#)

The CDC also said in its report that the chlorine smell of pools isn't actually what you think. "What you smell are actually chemicals that form when chlorine mixes with pee, poop, sweat and dirt from swimmer's bodies... These chemicals -- not chlorine -- can cause your eyes to get red and sting, make your nose run, and make you cough."

"Yuck!" the CDC concluded.



# Pee, not just chlorine, to blame for pool red-eye, says CDC

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Plenty of swimmers blame chlorine in pools for symptoms like red, stinging eyes and nasal irritation, but the reality is a bit more complicated and a lot more disgusting, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The [CDC](#) says the red eyes are caused by "chlorine binding with sweat, urine, and other waste from swimmers," creating irritants that can spread from the water to the air as the amount of waste in the pool increases, [KFOR](#) reports.

This makes eye irritation especially bad at many indoor pools, according to the CDC, which says pool operators should make sure there's plenty of fresh air circulating when there are plenty of swimmers.

Dr. Michael Beach, a man the CDC [describes](#) as its "foremost expert on waterborne illnesses," tells [Women's Health](#) that the CDC thinks swimming is a "fantastic activity" and the agency wants to keep it that way by keeping people healthy.

That means advising them not to pee in the pool—and to have a good shower before getting in, especially if they happen to be battling diarrhea.

"We have a new parasitic germ that has emerged that's immune to chlorine," continues Beach, explaining that it's spread through people—and not just babies—swimming when they have diarrhea.

"We've got to keep it out of the pool in the first place." And if you think you're quasi-protected thanks to the dye that supposedly changes the color of the water when someone pees in it, well, it's a "complete myth," Beach adds.

Read more on the harm that peeing in the pool can cause—and [how many adults admit to doing it](#).



## Swimming pool red-eye isn't from chlorine (It's from urine)

The US Healthy Swimming Program says that when your eyes go red and stinging in the pool it's caused by a chemical reaction between chlorine and urine.

by [Chris Matyszczyk](#)

[@ChrisMatyszczyk](#) / June 25, 2015 10:19 AM PDT

Sometimes you wake up to headlines that make your eyes water.

Usually, they're from the Daily Mail. Sometimes, however, **other news sources** offer a mere sentence that makes you look back to your childhood and wonder what might have been.

Today, the sentence involves reddyeye -- the stinging feeling that you sometimes get in your eyes during and after a swim in a pool.

Many people have often assumed this is caused by chlorine. Some even wonder whether they're allergic to chlorine. The truth, allegedly, is that they're being affected by chlurine. This is a name I've just given to the result of chlorine mixing with urine.

And this is apparently what causes eye irritation in swimming pools.

The information was actually released last month by the **National Swimming Pool Foundation**. Quoting the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, it said: "When nitrogen-containing compounds found in pee, sweat and dirt combine with chlorine, irritants are formed. These substances, not the chlorine itself, irritate the eyes, skin and respiratory system."

There's something tragically malevolent about a simple bodily function causing other parts of the body to malfunction.

It seems, though, that when you get a so-called swimming pool cough, it's caused by the chemical reaction between chlorine and urine actually getting caught in your throat.

One of the potential remedies is to put more chlorine into the pool, in order to kill off more of the bacteria. However, the CDC **says that** recreational water illnesses (RWI) have increased over the last 10 years. The most common is diarrhea. It says that 20,000 people have been run into the restroom by swimming pool bugs.

I hope your vacations are full of joys.