

## An Activity Book on Swimmer Hygiene for Kids

*By the Water Quality & Health Council*

Pool swimming is one of the healthiest and most fun-filled summertime activities available to children. Safe swimming depends on several factors, including proper swimming instruction, lifeguard supervision, and pool water quality management. Few people realize, however, that safe pool swimming also depends on swimmer hygiene. The new, downloadable [Healthy Swimming Education & Activity Book](#) is now available to teach kids the basics of swimmer hygiene, helping to prepare them for a lifetime of healthy pool swimming.

### *What Is Swimmer Hygiene Anyway?*

Some people are under the mistaken impression that the swimming pool is a giant sanitizer, and that there is no particular reason to shower before swimming or avoid discreetly urinating in the pool. In fact, the substances brought into the pool by swimmers, including perspiration, body oils, cosmetics, urine and fecal matter, all react with chlorine disinfectant in the pool, causing two unwanted results: (1) disinfectant needed to destroy waterborne pathogens is depleted, and (2) [irritating byproducts that degrade the swimming experience](#) are formed. The strong chemical odor associated with some pools and popularly attributed to chlorine, is in fact, the odor of these irritating byproducts.

A very important principle of swimmer hygiene is to avoid swimming when sick with diarrhea. Many waterborne illnesses are spread by microbes in diarrhea that are transferred through the water when diarrhea-contaminated pool water is swallowed. The chlorine-resistant waterborne parasite *Cryptosporidium*, or “*Crypto*” for short, [is notorious for causing outbreaks of diarrheal illness](#) spread by infected swimmers entering the pool before they are free of the parasite. People infected with *Cryptosporidium* should not swim in a public pool for two weeks after symptoms have abated.

### *A Shout-out to the Arizona Department of Health Services*

The activity book addresses swimmer hygiene issues with kid-friendly language and fun activities, reminding young swimmers to: shower before swimming, never swim when feeling sick or having diarrhea, refrain from “peeing or pooping” in the pool; and avoid swallowing pool water. It was developed by the Arizona Department of Health Services, which was awarded the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals’ Dr. R. Neil Lowry Grant at the recent National Environmental Health Association’s 2018 Annual Education Conference & Exhibition in Anaheim. The \$5,000 grant “will allow the Arizona



Department of Health Services to continue to educate the public about waterborne illnesses and prevention through printing of health education materials, such as the Healthy Swimming activity book,” according to a July 9 [press release](#). We congratulate the Arizona Department of Health Services for tackling a difficult issue so creatively, and we encourage parents, camp counselors and swimming instructors to promote the [Healthy Swimming Education & Activity Book](#) to young swimmers.