



This Winter, Use Your Senses around Your Indoor Pool

By Bob G. Vincent

Is swimming your exercise of choice this winter? According to the [US Census Bureau](#), swimming is America's fourth most popular recreational activity after (1) walking, (2) exercising with equipment and (3) camping. Unless you're a polar bear, indoor pools help make swimming a year-round option, and swimming brings health benefits galore. But how do you know if you are swimming in a healthy indoor pool?



A "Natatorium" is an indoor swimming pool

Use Your Senses around the Pool

The Water Quality & Health Council asks swimmers to be sensible around the pool. Translation: In addition to making smart decisions on safety, such as diving only in designated areas and not running on the deck, swimmers can use their five senses to:

1. **See:** You should be able to see clearly through the water to the pool floor stripes.
2. **Smell:** Indoor pools should not have a strong, irritating chemical odor. This is a common problem in indoor pools, however, stemming from (a) poor air ventilation and/or (b) improper pool chemistry. See the text box below.
3. **Touch:** The tiles around the pool water line should feel clean, not slimy.
4. **Hear:** You may hear the sound of the pool filter at work.
5. **Taste:** Avoid tasting the water; swallowing even a small amount of water could make you sick. Remind children not to drink pool water!

Indoor Air Quality

Irritating chemical compounds called chloramines can build up in the air and water of an indoor swimming pool, causing respiratory and other health effects that degrade the indoor swimming experience. Chloramines are the chemical products of (a) chlorine from pool sanitizers and (b) ammonia-based substances (e.g., sweat, urine, oils) from the bodies of swimmers. Pool facility operators can minimize swimmers' exposure to chloramines by maintaining proper pool chemistry, and encouraging swimmers to shower before entering the pool and refrain from "peeing in the pool."

Another way that pool operators can reduce chloramines in and around the pool is by adequately managing air exchange in the indoor pool environment. Chloramines are volatile and fill the air over the swimming pool after they form in the water. Air currents that sweep away chloramines also help remove chloramines from the water. Good air exchange with outside air also helps reduce the humidity of the indoor air, helping to reduce mold and mildew.

Another way to ensure that you are swimming in a healthy pool is to use pool test strips to check that the pH and "free chlorine" level are within acceptable bounds. These strips are available in hardware and pool supply stores, and free from the Water Quality & Health Council each summer.

For more information on indoor pool air quality, please see the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [website](#).

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