



Why Measure the Chlorine Level and pH of Pool Water?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say chlorine and pH are the first defense against germs that can make swimmers sick. The chlorine level and pH of pool water provide a “snapshot” of a pool’s health at any given time. The chlorine level and pH can change over the course of each day, especially in a crowded public pool. Typically, the pool manager is responsible for maintaining the chlorine level and pH within acceptable ranges. The manager does this by regularly testing the pool water and adding appropriate pool chemicals. Using pool test strips, patrons can monitor pool health too, and if necessary, bring any unacceptable readings to the attention of pool managers.

pH is a measure of the relative acidity of water. Maintaining pool water pH in the range of 7.2 to 7.8 will ensure that chlorine will work effectively to kill germs in the water without causing skin and eye irritation. The free chlorine level of a pool indicates how much chlorine is available or “free” to destroy germs in water. Pool water should contain between one and four “parts per million” or “ppm” free chlorine. Chlorine is used up over time by sunlight and contaminants, including dirt and sweat from swimmers’ bodies, so it is important to make sure there is adequate free chlorine—think of it as chlorine in reserve---available to destroy germs at any moment.