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## **Survey: 30% of Pool Owners Admit They Pee in the Pool**

*But Urine Makes Backyard Swimming Pools Less Equipped  
to Kill Viruses, Bacteria, and Parasites*

**WASHINGTON** — Most public pools face extended closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leading some swimmers to consider backyard pools for relief from the summer heat. But a new survey finds that backyard pools may hide their own share of unsanitary secrets.

The survey found that **30% of pool owners admitted to peeing in their pool, 28% said they would swim within one hour of having diarrhea, and 54% don't shower before swimming.** Not only is it gross to pee in the pool, but also, pee reacts with chlorine, reducing the amount of chlorine available to kill dangerous viruses in the pool water.

According to the [CDC](#), **there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through pool water** – and **proper pool operation and disinfection of the water (e.g., with chlorine or bromine) should kill the virus.** However, CDC recommends that individuals should continue to [protect themselves and others](#) when swimming with people other than those we live with, for example, by practicing social distancing and not gathering in groups – both in and out of the water.

The survey also found that **half of pool owners (49%) won't invite guests back after discovering they peed in the pool,** and 16% would tell them to leave immediately. But guests may be less likely than owners to pee in the pool – only 16% of swimmers admitted to peeing in someone else's backyard pool.

Unsanitary behaviors like peeing in the pool are especially problematic in light of the survey's finding that, among pool owners who handle some or all of their pool's maintenance themselves, **23% don't test chlorine level and pH more often than once every two weeks.** [CDC guidelines](#) recommend testing chlorine level and pH at least twice per day, and more often during heavy use.

That's why experts from the [Water Quality & Health Council](#), the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), and the [Pool & Hot Tub Alliance \(PHTA\)](#) are educating swimmers and pool owners about the importance of maintaining appropriate pool chemistry this summer.

"As we are in the midst of a pandemic, public health, and people's personal contribution to it is on everyone's mind," said Dr. Chris Wiant, chair of the Water Quality & Health Council. "Just as you should wear a mask when out in public today, in the pool you should protect yourself and other swimmers by practicing good swimmer hygiene – don't pee in the pool and remember to shower before swimming."

What would you do upon discovering a guest peed in your pool? For many swimmers, what happens at the pool won't stay at the pool as **36% of pool owners say they would tell mutual friends about the incident.** Across all swimmers surveyed, Millennials are twice as likely as Boomers to alert mutual friends.

The survey also found that **90% of backyard pool owners store their swimming pool chemicals in potentially unsafe locations**, including 33% of pool owners with children who don't lock up their chemicals – posing a safety threat to unsupervised children.

“Residential swimming pool owners should store pool chemicals in a cool, dry, and well-ventilated location, away from direct sunlight, and locked up to protect children and pets,” said Michele Hlavsa, chief of CDC’s Healthy Swimming program. “Swimming is a great way to spend time with family and friends, so it’s essential to maximize the fun by minimizing the risk of illness and injury in and around the water.” CDC offers free and downloadable [pool chemical safety posters](#).

Public health experts are hopeful that more backyard pool owners will regularly test chlorine levels and pH this summer. To help, the Water Quality & Health Council is offering [free pool test kits](#) through its 16<sup>th</sup> annual [Healthy Pools](#) campaign. Swimmers can use the kit to measure chlorine level and pH in both backyard and, once opened, public pools.

“Even if pool owners have a pool maintenance company manage their pool chemistry, owners must still safely store their chemicals and test the pool water often. This will help protect any backyard pool users from chemical accidents and waterborne infections,” said Sabeena Hickman, President and CEO of the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance.

The 2020 Healthy Pools survey was conducted by the Water Quality & Health Council, an independent, multidisciplinary group of scientific experts, health professionals, and consumer advocates that is sponsored by the American Chemistry Council’s Chlorine Chemistry Division. The survey interviewed 2,143 American adults online on April 9-14, 2020, including 675 self-declared residential pool owners, with the intent to measure perceptions and behaviors related to swimming pools and public health.

The survey had a margin of error of +/- 2.12% at the 95% confidence level for the whole sample, and a margin of error of +/- 3.77% at the 95% confidence level for the sample of residential pool owners. The survey results were nationally representative of American adults in terms of age, race, gender, region, household income, and pool ownership status.

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