



Better Safe



WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Summer Swim Time

Staying Healthy At The Pool & Beach



Summer is a great time to go out and have fun in the water. But recreational waters—including swimming pools, lakes and oceans—can sometimes get contaminated with bacteria and viruses. Swimming in contaminated water can make you and your family sick.

What Lies Beneath

The most common illnesses caused by contaminated water are stomach and intestinal upsets, usually with vomiting or diarrhea. You can pick up these conditions at the beach or even at properly treated swimming pools, because chlorine doesn't kill germs right away. Sometimes people don't even realize that they got sick from swimming, because it can take one to three days for symptoms to appear. Most of these illnesses aren't dangerous, and they go away in a few days. But they sure can put a kink in your summer plans.

Natural water sources, including lakes, rivers and oceans, often get contaminated from storm water runoff. As rain water flows over places like parks, lawns and farms, it can pick up bacteria and viruses from animal feces. Then the water collects in storm drains and can be exposed to leaky underground sewage pipes. Eventually, the water flows out to the beach.

Lake and ocean water near storm-water outfall pipes—the places where drains or sewers release their contents—tends to be calm, shallow and warm. These conditions may seem perfect for little kids, but it's also an ideal home for bacteria and viruses. Don't play near the storm-water outfall pipes. And if it's rained in the last 24 hours, check the beach posting signs to see if it's safe to go in the water.

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Better Safe!



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Water Safety Tips

- Shower before and after going into a swimming pool.
- Stay out of the water if you've had diarrhea in the last 2 weeks to help protect others from infectious germs.
- Try not to swallow recreational water.
- Avoid swimming or playing near places where storm water is released on the beach.
- Stay out of the water for at least 24 hours after a storm.
- Always wash your hands before you eat or drink.

Summer Swim Time

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Have Fun, Safe Swimming This Summer

Many popular public beaches get tested regularly for contamination. Health departments usually look for certain types of bacteria that are common in sewage. If the count of these bacteria is higher than the recommended limit set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that means at least 1 in every 50 swimmers is likely to get sick. Usually, health departments will close the beach until it's clean again.

Dr. Rachel Noble, a researcher at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, studies bacteria that hang out naturally in coastal waters. Some of these bacteria, including a few *Vibrio* species, are especially dangerous for people with certain medical conditions, such as diabetes or liver disease. "If you have a compromised immune system and you get a *Vibrio* infection, those are going to be very serious," Noble says. The infections might even be deadly. If you have a medical condition that affects your immune system, talk to your doctor before heading for the water.

Our shared oceans and lakes are great for fun and relaxation. But our habits on land affect the quality of these precious resources. "Doing small things, like picking up after your dog and recycling your oil, really makes a difference," says Noble. Find out where the storm water goes in your area. With a little knowledge, you can enjoy the water this summer—and stay healthy too!

Keep Kids Safe

In addition to protecting your family from bacterial and infectious diseases around and in the water, it's absolutely critical to practice water safety to prevent accidents and drowning:

- Teach children water safety and swimming skills as early as possible.
- Always brief babysitters on water safety, emphasizing the need for constant supervision.
- Appoint a "designated watcher" to monitor children during social gatherings at or near pools.
- Equip doors and windows that exit to a pool area with alarms.
- Install a poolside phone, preferably a cordless model, with emergency numbers programmed into speed-dial.
- Post CPR instructions and learn the procedures.
- Keep rescue equipment poolside. Don't wait for the paramedics to arrive because you will lose valuable life-saving seconds. Four to six minutes without oxygen can cause permanent brain damage or death.
- Keep a first aid kit at poolside.
- Don't think you'll hear a child who's in trouble in the water; a child drowning is a silent death, with no splashing to alert anyone that the child is in trouble.



Claims About Cocoa

Can Chocolate *Really* Be Good for You?

Many of us would love to believe that chocolate is a health food. Maybe you've heard or read about its potential benefits. Eating chocolate may have some health pluses, but the research is far from certain. The drawbacks, on the other hand, are clear. Think twice before you reach for that tempting treat.

What Research Tells Us

The idea that chocolate might be good for you stems from studies of the Kuna Indians, who live on islands off the coast of Panama. They have a low risk of cardio vascular disease or high blood pressure given their weight and salt intake. Researchers realized that genes weren't protecting them, because those who moved away from the Kuna islands developed high blood pressure and heart disease at typical rates. Something in their island environment must have kept their blood pressure from rising.

But Kuna cocoa is a far cry from the chocolate that most Americans eat. The Kuna make a drink with dried and ground cocoa beans (the seeds of the cocoa tree) along with a little added sweetener. The chocolate we tend to eat, on the other hand, is made from cocoa beans that are roasted and processed in various other ways, and then combined with ingredients like whole milk.

Processing can extract two main components from cocoa beans: cocoa solids and cocoa butter. Powdered cocoa is made using the solids. Chocolate is made from a combination of cocoa solids and cocoa butter. The color of the chocolate depends partly on the amount of cocoa solids and added ingredients, such as milk. In general, though, the darker the chocolate, the more cocoa solids it contains. Researchers think the solids are where the healthy compounds are. White chocolate, in contrast, contains no cocoa solids at all.

Nothing is Conclusive...Yet

Laboratory studies have uncovered several mechanisms that might explain chocolate's heart-healthy benefits. However, it's hard to prove whether the chocolate that most Americans eat actually has those effects in the human body. Controlling how much chocolate people eat and tracking them for long periods of time is not an easy task.

Studies looking into the long-term health effects of chocolate have relied on people to recall how much chocolate they ate. The researchers then compared those levels with health outcomes. While such studies can find associations, they can't prove the effects of a particular food.



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Claims About Cocoa

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Chocolate contains high levels of compounds thought to help prevent cancer, too. However, researchers point out that direct evidence of chocolate preventing cancer is simply hard to come by. Since cancer can take many years to develop, it's difficult to prove whether eating chocolate can affect disease. Instead, researchers look to see if factors linked to cancer change when chocolate is consumed.

Could Something So Good Also Be Healthy For Us?

Examining The Health Benefits Of Chocolate

Some research also suggests that chocolate might help prevent diabetes. However, the challenges in proving this link are similar to those of heart disease and cancer.

Another thing that makes it hard to interpret these studies is that they often use different chocolates, and so their ingredients and health effects may vary.

Compounds called flavanols are thought to be responsible for many of chocolate's beneficial effects. These compounds are also found in tea, wine, fruits and vegetables. Different chocolates can vary greatly in their flavanol content. Cocoa beans naturally differ in their flavanol levels. A large portion of the flavanols can also be removed during processing. In fact, companies often remove these compounds intentionally because of their bitter taste. The end result is that there's no way to know whether the products you're looking at contain high flavanol levels.

So should you eat chocolate? Chocolate can have a lot of calories, and the importance of a healthy weight is well known. If you're eating chocolate, make sure to watch the calorie content, the fat content and the sugar content.

Eating Chocolate

If you don't eat chocolate now, the research isn't strong enough to suggest you start. But if you already eat chocolate, here are some healthy tips:

- Eat as dark a chocolate as you can.
- Avoid white and milk chocolates. Also avoid filled chocolates, such as truffles.
- Make hot chocolate with unsweetened cocoa, water or non-fat milk, and little added sugar.
- Choose dark chocolate instead of less-healthy treats, like full-fat ice cream or sugar-laden candy.
- Watch your total calories. Chocolate has a lot of calories, and gaining weight will more than wipe out any benefits you might get from the compounds in chocolate.



Is DIZZINESS Getting You Down?

A balance disorder makes you feel as if you're moving, spinning or floating, even though you're quite still. More than four in 10 Americans will experience an episode of dizziness sometime during their lives that's significant enough to send them to a doctor.

Dizziness can range from feeling lightheaded to woozy to disoriented. Feeling that you or your surroundings are spinning is called vertigo. Any of these sensations can be extremely distressing.

The Complexity of Balance

Balance is a multisystem function. It begins with a series of signals within the tiny balance organs of the inner ear. These organs work with your brain's visual system to give you a sense of your body's position. They also keep objects from blurring when your head moves. Sense receptors in skin, joints and muscles also send balance-related signals to the brain. The brain receives and coordinates information from all these different body systems. Balance disorders can arise when any of these signals malfunction.

Because balance is so complex, it can be hard to figure out the underlying cause of certain problems. Some balance disorders can begin suddenly. They might arise from an ear infection, a head injury or certain medications. Low blood pressure can lead to dizziness when you stand up quickly. Disorders related to vision, muscles, bones or joints can also contribute to balance problems.

Feeling Dizzy?

Talk with Your Doc

If you think you may have a balance disorder, talk with your health care provider. Your doctor can assess whether your symptoms might be caused by a serious disorder, such as a heart or blood condition. If an inner ear balance disorder is likely, you may be referred to a specialist such as an otolaryngologist, a doctor with expertise in the ear, nose and throat. You might receive a hearing test, a balance test and possibly an imaging study of the brain.

Work with your doctor to figure out how to cope with your dizziness on a daily basis and reduce your risk of injury. For example, wear low-heeled shoes or walking shoes outdoors. You might decide to try using a cane or walker. Safe, secure handrails in stairwells and grip handles in bathrooms can help make your home safer. Driving a car may be especially hazardous, so ask your doctor if it's safe for you to drive.

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Is DiZziNesS Getting You Down? (Continued from previous page)

Tell Your Doctor

Discuss your symptoms with a health care provider if:

- You often feel unsteady.
- You feel as if the room is spinning around you.
- You feel as if you're moving when you know you're standing or sitting still.
- You lose your balance and fall.
- You feel as if you're falling.
- You feel lightheaded, or as if you might faint.
- Your vision becomes blurred.
- You sometimes feel disoriented, losing your sense of time, place or identity.



A specialized rehabilitation therapist can give you a set of head, body and eye exercises to help reduce dizziness and nausea.

Meanwhile, researchers continue to work to develop new, more effective approaches. In one experimental rehabilitation strategy, now in clinical trials, scientists have created a “virtual reality” grocery store. It allows people with balance disorders to walk safely on a treadmill through computer-generated store aisles. While holding onto a grocery cart, they can look up and down, turn their heads and reach for items on virtual shelves. By doing this, they safely learn how to navigate an environment that can be challenging for someone with a balance problem.

The key for people looking for treatment is to go to the best team of clinical experts that they can gain access to. It's very important to get that level of assessment.

Balance Disorders

Vertigo

The most common is a sudden, often harmless burst of vertigo that might arise with an abrupt change in the position of the head, like when you bend over to tie your shoes.

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo

Technically known as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), this condition can result from a head injury or simply from getting older. BPPV sometimes occurs when tiny calcium crystals in the inner ear become displaced. In that case, your doctor can treat BPPV by carefully moving the head and body to reposition these particles.

Ménière's Disease

Another common balance disorder is known as Ménière's disease. It can develop at any age, but most often strikes adults between 40 and 60 years of age. Symptoms include intense vertigo, hearing loss, nausea, tinnitus (a ringing or buzzing in the ear) and a feeling of fullness in the ear. Ménière's disease usually affects only one ear.

Some people with Ménière's disease have single attacks of dizziness separated by long periods of time. Others may experience many attacks closer together over a number of days. Some affected people have vertigo so extreme that they lose their balance and fall. These episodes are called “drop attacks.”



To Your HEALTH



WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

Got The **Summertime** Sniffles?

Treating A Cold In The **Warmer Months**

Most everyone looks forward to summer—time to get away, get outside and have some fun. So what could be more unfair than catching a cold when it's warm? How can cold symptoms arise when it's not cold and flu season? Is there any way to dodge the summertime sniffles?

Colds Don't Take Vacations!

Cold symptoms can be caused by more than 200 different viruses. Each can bring the sneezing, scratchy throat and runny nose that can be the first signs of a cold. The colds we catch in winter are usually triggered by the most common viral infections in humans, a group of germs called rhinoviruses. Rhinoviruses and a few other cold-causing viruses seem to survive best in cooler weather. Their numbers surge in September and begin to dwindle in May, but they don't go completely dormant.

During summer months, the viral landscape begins to shift. "Generally speaking, summer and winter colds are caused by different viruses," says Dr. Michael Pichichero, a pediatrician and infectious disease researcher at the Rochester General Hospital Research Institute in New York. "When you talk about summer colds, you're probably talking about a non-polio enterovirus infection."

Enteroviruses: A Summer Time Threat

Enteroviruses can infect the tissues in your nose and throat, eyes, digestive system and elsewhere. A few enteroviruses can cause polio, but vaccines have mostly eliminated these viruses from Western countries. Far more widespread are more than 60 types of non-polio enteroviruses. They're the second most common

PROTECT YOU & YOUR FAMILY YEAR-ROUND

Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs:

- ✓ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ✓ Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- ✓ If you are sick with flu-like illness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- ✓ While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.



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Got The **Summertime** **Sniffles?**

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type of virus—after rhinovirus—that infects humans. About half of people with enterovirus infections don't get sick at all. But nationwide, enteroviruses cause an estimated 10 million to 15 million illnesses each year, usually between June and October.

Enteroviruses can cause a fever that comes on suddenly. Body temperatures may range from 101 to 104 °F. Enteroviruses can also cause mild respiratory symptoms, sore throat, headache, muscle aches and gastrointestinal issues like nausea or vomiting.

“All age groups can be affected, but like most viral infections, enterovirus infections predominate in childhood,” says Pichichero. Adults may be protected from enterovirus infections if they've developed antibodies from previous exposures. But adults can still get sick if they encounter a new type of enterovirus.

Less common enteroviruses can cause other symptoms. Some can lead to conjunctivitis, or pinkeye—a swelling of the outer layer of the eye and eyelid. Others can cause an illness with rash. In rare cases, enteroviruses can affect the heart or brain.

To prevent enterovirus infections, says Pichichero, “it's all about blocking viral transmission.” The viruses travel in respiratory secretions, like saliva or mucus, or in the stool of an infected person. You can become infected by direct contact. Or you might pick up the virus by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, such as a telephone, doorknob or baby's diaper. “Frequent hand washing and avoiding exposure to people who are sick with fever can help prevent the spread of infection,” says Pichichero.

The summer colds caused by enteroviruses generally clear up without treatment within a few days or even a week. But see a health care provider if you have concerning symptoms, like a high fever or a rash.



TREATING A COLD

There's no cure for a cold, but you can relieve symptoms by:

- ✓ Resting in bed.
- ✓ Drinking plenty of fluids.
- ✓ Taking acetaminophen—Tylenol, for example—for headache or fever.
- ✓ Gargling with warm salt water or using ice chips, throat sprays or lozenges for a sore throat.
- ✓ Using a decongestant or saline nasal spray for nasal symptoms.