

5,000 Pool Chemical Injuries Treated Annually

May 16, 2009

2009 National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week (May 18-24) aims to educate parents, instructors, pool maintenance workers, and others.

The injury toll caused by exposures to swimming pool chemicals is higher than you might expect. CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* has published a new study timed for 2009 National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week (May 18-24) that says these preventable injuries account for as many as 5,200 emergency room visits each year. Almost half of the 2007 injuries occurred at a residence.

People are hurt by inhaling fumes when they open pool chemical containers, attempting to pre-dissolve pool chemicals or handling them improperly, or having the chemicals splash into their eyes. The summer swimming season from Memorial Day to Labor Day is the prime time, of course.

The week is meant to raise awareness about healthy swimming behaviors, including ways to prevent recreational water illnesses caused by swallowing, inhaling vapors, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, spas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers, or oceans.

"Pool chemicals make the water we swim in safer by protecting us from germs, but these same chemicals can also cause injuries if they are not properly handled," said Michele Hlavsa, the study's lead author and an epidemiologist at CDC. The study examined 36 pool chemical-associated health events reported to the New York state Department of Health for recreational water venues during 1983-2006 and analyzed 1998-2007 emergency room visit data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System and 2007 data from the National Poison Data System.

For additional information about water safety see these links:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/>
- http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/6_steps.htm