

Pools swimming with 30+ types of bacteria!

By SEAN POULTER - Last updated at 20:47pm on 19th June 2007 [Source: Daily Mail online]

Holiday swimming pools are putting the health of millions of Britons at risk amid evidence they contain up to 30 different bugs. The majority of pools in sunshine resorts are laced with bacteria that create a potential health hazard. Some are little better than toilets, with one in four identified as a serious health hazard. Swimming pool chlorine may also cause asthma.

Swimming pools where children play are filled with bacteria according to Which? magazine. Hotels and apartment blocks in popular destinations across Europe are failing to ensure their pools are properly filtered, cleaned and disinfected. While pool staff may be seen each morning skimming off debris such as leaves and bugs, the real threat - bacteria - is hidden beneath the surface.

Sweat, urine, mucus, saliva, hair, dead skin and faecal matter - not to mention sun cream, perfume and cosmetics - are among the pollutants introduced by bathers into pools. Failure to properly clean the pool can trigger at best mild stomach upsets, ear and eye infections. However, there is evidence of serious outbreaks of violent stomach problems, which are particularly dangerous to toddlers and the elderly.

Frank Behany, of consumer rights group Holiday TravelWatch, said: "When people are ill during or after a holiday they usually assume it is because of something they've eaten, but it could easily be caused by the water they've been swimming in." Which? magazine tested the water in 80 pools in

Majorca and Corfu, which are two of the most popular destinations for British travellers. Only two achieved the highest standards of cleanliness, while another 13 were considered "satisfactory".

The remaining 65 were unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. The research found a quarter - 20 - were so contaminated that they were certain health hazards, while another 29 were potentially hazardous. Seven of the pools contained such high levels of the disinfectant chlorine that it would bleach bathing costumes and cause irritation to the eyes and skin. This research is the most recent available, although it was first published several years ago.

THE BUGS IN THE WATER		
■ ECOLI: A form of bacteria which lives in the intestines where it helps digest food. However, when certain forms of Ecoli get into other parts of the body they can cause severe stomach upsets. Children can be most badly affected and in certain cases it can lead to permanent kidney damage or even death.	■ GIARDIA: Infection can occur from consuming contaminated food or water. Symptoms include loss of appetite, lethargy, fever, explosive diarrhoea and projectile vomiting.	■ CRYPTOSPORIDIUM: A microscopic parasite that causes diarrhoea lasting up to two weeks after which patients usually recover. It's only serious to people with immune deficiency.
	■ PSEUDOMONAS AERUGINOSA: Can affect the lungs, urinary tract and open wounds and cause vomiting and diarrhoea.	■ ACANTHAMOEBA: Can enter the body by cuts on the skin or the surface of the eye, causing swelling and pain in the eyeball.

Doctors calculate that there can be any one of 30 different bugs in a swimming pool. Cryptosporidium and E.coli, both of which can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, are caused by faecal material.

There have been reports of Giardia, a parasite that causes chronic diarrhoea, being transmitted at a waterslide park.

Some pools can harbour a bacterium called *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, which is responsible for skin and ear infections. Another harmful bug, *Acanthamoeba*, can attack the surface of the eye, causing painful inflammation.



Howard Gosling, of the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group, said: "There are stringent internationally enforced fire regulations around the world, but nothing equivalent for swimming pools." He said the interaction between chlorine and human matter in a pool can produce gases such as nitrogen trichloride, which can cause asthma. A spokesman for Which? said: "In a well-run pool, pollutants are easily dealt with through a combination of disinfectants, filtration and dilution.

Problems start when pools are mismanaged or neglected." It advised families not to swim if a pool is strewn with debris, scummy, smelly, or cloudy - particularly if they cannot see the bottom. -END-

www.dive-shield.com