

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

Splash in the pool - not the chemicals



Jumping into a swimming pool filled with cool, clear, sparkling water is especially refreshing on a hot, humid summer day. The attractive water can melt away heat and the cares of the day.

But, keeping a pool in top shape takes plenty of determination and dedication. It also takes the cautious use of a variety of chemicals. The benefits of swimming pool chemicals are numerous: safe, clear, algae-free water. And yet the same chemicals used to maintain and treat swimming pool water can be potentially hazardous if not used and handled correctly.

For example, the chemicals commonly used to manage the pH of pool water, such as chlorine and muriatic acid, can cause a range of reactions - from irritating to severely damaging - to any tissue they contact. Also, if the dust or odor from these chemicals is inhaled, some people will experience coughing, choking, chest discomfort and shortness of breath. If the material gets in the eyes, it can cause redness, tearing and, potentially, eye damage. If the chemical gets on the skin, it can cause redness, burning and, potentially, a chemical burn.

Here are some safety tips for using pool chemicals:

- Use pool chemicals in an open, well-ventilated area.
- Be careful to avoid any direct contact with eyes or skin. If an eye exposure does occur, immediately try to remove any of the chemical by gently rinsing the eye or skin for at least 15 minutes with lukewarm water. Call the poison center if redness, pain or burning persists.
- If someone experiences shortness of breath, chest burning or coughing after inhaling the fumes from pool chemicals, then have the person get fresh air, take a warm shower and breathe in the warm mist from the clean water. If their symptoms continue, call 911 and get medical attention.

By being aware of the potential hazards, and by closely following the instructions for use, swimming pool chemicals can be used safely. And, safe use of these products can keep that dip in the pool a refreshing and delightful summer experience.

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions call the tollfree national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.