

SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

Drowning is the seventh leading cause of death for children ages birth to 17 years old in Georgia.¹ In 2024, 31 children in that age group drowned,² and there were 161 emergency room visit for drowning and submersion.³

WATER-RELATED INJURIES IN THE U.S.

While the biggest threat to children around unexpected, unsupervised access to water is drowning, every year thousands of children are treated in the emergency room for non-fatal water-related injuries.⁴

Estimated Number of Emergency Room-Treated Non-fatal Pool or Spa Injuries, 2022-2024⁵

	Younger than 5	5-14 years	Total <15 years
Average	4,600	1,700	6,300
2024	4,300	1,900	6,200
2023	4,900	1,300	6,200
2022	4,500	1,900	6,400

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: National Electronic Injury Surveillance System

Most drownings of children ages 1 to 4 happen in swimming pools.

SWIMMING POOL RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for ensuring public swimming pools are clean, healthy, and safe. In addition to **adult supervision**, there are laws in place regarding fencing, pool drains, and clean water that are critical to pool safety.

Public Pool Barriers⁶

- All outdoor swimming pools and spas must be enclosed by a barrier (e.g., fence, safety cover, wall, building wall, or a combination) that prevents entry to the pool area when the pool is closed.
- Top of the barrier should be at least 4 feet high.
- Pedestrian access gates should be self-closing and self-latching; other gates should have a self-latching device.

Public Pool Drains⁷

- All pools must have at least two main drain suction outlets.
- Suction outlets must have a cover that has been tested by a nationally recognized testing laboratory and comply with the current standards.
- The main drain must be visible through the water from the pool edge.
- All drain covers and grates must meet appropriate standards.

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WHY ARE POOL INSPECTIONS IMPORTANT?



Germes that cause water illnesses can be spread in recreational settings when swallowing water that has been contaminated with **fecal matter**.⁸

Because of this, children under 4 years of age, and those not toilet-trained, are required to wear a swim diaper in a public swimming pool.⁹ **HOWEVER IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW:** Swim diapers are not leak proof. Diarrhea-causing germes may be delayed from leaking into the water for a few minutes, but these germes still contaminate the water.¹⁰ Appropriate levels of disinfectants kill most germes within minutes, but some can survive for days.¹¹

Germ ¹²	Symptoms Can Include:	Time It Takes to Kill or Inactive Germes in Chlorinated Water ¹⁷
E.coli O157:H7 Bacterium	Watery or bloody diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting ¹³	Less than 1 minute
Hepatitis A virus	Fever, dark urine or clay-colored stools, diarrhea, feeling tired, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, jaundice ¹⁴	About 16 minutes
Giardia parasite	Diarrhea, gas, greasy stools that tend to float, stomach or abdominal cramps, upset stomach or nausea/vomiting, dehydration (loss of fluids) ¹⁵	About 45 minutes
Crypto parasite	Watery diarrhea, stomach cramps or pain, dehydration, nausea, vomiting, fever, weight loss ¹⁶	About 10.6 days

*1 part per million (ppm) free chlorine at pH 7.5 or less and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher. Source: CDC

SWIMMING POOLS IN GEORGIA

To ensure minimum standards are met, DPH regularly inspects public swimming pools. Public swimming pools must have: ¹⁸



A clearly labeled emergency shut-off valve



A trained operator perform a minimum of two weekly visits and document conditions



Regular collection of water samples to test



DPH'S 7 PREVENTION STEPS FOR HEALTHY AND SAFE SWIMMING

- Closely supervise children in the water
- Don't swim when you have diarrhea
- Shower before you enter the pool
- Don't swallow the water you swim in
- Don't urinate in the water and always report fecal matter
- Don't swim if pool drain covers are missing, broke, or can't clearly be seen
- Report hazards to your local health department or environmental health office

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FACTSHEET CITATIONS



REFERENCES FOR SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

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