Swim Diapers & Swim Pants

The use of swim diapers and swim pants might give users, parents, and pool staff a false sense of security regarding fecal contamination.

Some research has looked into how well swim diapers and swim pants are able to keep feces (poop) and infection-causing germs from leaking into the pool. Even though swim diapers and swim pants might hold in some solid feces (1), they are not leak proof. Swim diapers can delay diarrhea-causing germs like, Cryptosporidium (/healthywater/swimming/rwi/illnesses/cryptosporidium.html), from leaking into the water for a few minutes, but swim diapers do not keep these germs from contaminating the water (2). No manufacturers claim these products prevent leakage of diarrhea into pools.

All swimmers should stay out of the water when they are ill with diarrhea, even if they are wearing swim diapers or swim pants. They risk contaminating the pool with feces and germs, which can make others sick.

Swim diapers and swim pants are not a substitute for frequent diaper changing and bathroom breaks. It is recommended that swim diapers and swim pants are checked frequently and changed away from the poolside.

Pool operators should ensure that:

- All patrons understand the importance of NOT swimming when ill with diarrhea.
- Caregivers/users frequently (approximately every 30 to 60 minutes) check swim diapers and swim pants and change them away from the poolside (for example, in the bathroom). This will allow for washing hands after diaper/pants changing and reduce the chance of fecal and germ contamination of areas around the pool. It can also reduce the amount of urine in the pool that binds with disinfectant and creates irritants in the air (see Irritants (Chloramines) & Indoor Pool Air Quality (/healthywater/swimming/pools/irritants-indoor-pool-air-quality.html)).

To learn more about how you can help stop germs from spreading in the water you and others swim in, visit Triple A’s of Healthy Swimming (/healthywater/swimming/pools/triple-a-healthy-swimming.html).
