



## Healthy Swimming

[Healthy Swimming Home](#)

### Splash Pads



Splash pads (also known as interactive fountains, spray pads, spray parks, or wet decks) are aquatic venues that spray or jet water on users. Splash pads are usually designed so that standing water does not collect in the water play area to reduce the risk of drowning. Because of this design, splash pads do not always meet the local, state, territorial, or tribal definition of an “aquatic venue.” This means they are not always regulated, nor are they always required to disinfect the water with germ-killing chemicals. Splash pads can spread germs and make users sick if the water is not adequately disinfected. So, users and parents of young users should take their own steps to stop the spread of germs.

### Stopping the Spread of Germs in Splash Pads

Splash pad users and parents of young users can take a few steps to help stop the spread of germs in the water:

DO:

- DO stay out of the water if you are sick with diarrhea.
- DO shower before getting in the water.
- DO take kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers every hour.

DONT:

- DONT swallow the water.
- DONT poop or pee in the water.
- DONT sit or stand on the jets. Sitting or standing on jets can rinse poop off your butt.

## Splash Pads and Germs Explained

The water in some splash pads passes only once through the splash pad's pipes and then drains out (typically into a sewer system). In other splash pads, the water is recirculated, meaning the pipes drain sprayed water into a tank that is typically underground. Then the water goes through a filter and is disinfected with germ-killing chemicals (chlorine or bromine) before it is sprayed again.

When kids and adults play in splash pads, germs, poop, pee, and dirt can rinse off their bodies and shoes.

**MAKE A HEALTHY SPLASH!**

Swallowing water at splash pads (also known as water playgrounds and spray pads/parks) can make you sick.

Germs can get into the water from poop or when they rinse off a person's body or splash pad surfaces. Swallowing water containing germs can make you sick with diarrhea.

**KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:**

- Sprayed water typically gets drained, filtered, and disinfected before being sprayed again.
- Chlorine kills most germs within a few minutes, not instantly.
- Swim diapers don't stop germs, poop, or pee from getting in the water.

**Keep germs, poop, and pee OUT of the water.**

**DO:**

- Stay out of the water if you are sick with diarrhea.
- Shower before getting in the water.
- Take kids on bathroom breaks or check diapers every hour.

**DON'T:**

- Swallow the water.
- Poop or pee in the water.
- Sit or stand on the jets. Sitting or standing on jets can rinse poop off your butt.

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Printable Fact Sheet: Make a Healthy Splash [PDF - 1 page] (English)

Printable Fact Sheet: Make a Healthy Splash [PDF - 1 página] (Español)

**DON'T go in splash pads if you have diarrhea.**

**DON'T sit or stand on jets.**

**DON'T swallow the water.**

Jets can rinse poop and germs into the water. Chlorine kills most germs within minutes, but some poop germs can stay alive more than 7 days. Swallowing water with these germs can make you sick.



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1200 x 675 animated GIF

Sprayed water can also rinse off any debris (such as human or animal poop, dirt, or leaves) from splash pad surfaces.

It can be difficult to keep the water in splash pads adequately disinfected. Spraying water reduces its chlorine or bromine level. Plus, when poop, pee, dirt, and debris get in the water, chlorine or bromine combine with them and break them down, meaning there is even less disinfectant available to kill germs. [Swim diapers](#) do not stop germs, poop, or pee from getting in the water.

### Illnesses Linked to Splash Pads

- In 2021, a 3-year-old child died from a brain infection—primary amebic meningoencephalitis (PAM)—caused by the germ *Naegleria fowleri*\* after playing in a splash pad. Texas public health officials found that the splash pad's water was recirculated and not adequately disinfected.



Properly operated and managed splash pads create healthy and safe water experiences.

- In 2005, over 2,300 people were infected with the germ *Cryptosporidium* after using a splash pad.<sup>1</sup> New York public health officials found that splash pads were not regulated in the state. In response, New York passed emergency public health laws to regulate splash pads. This included requiring ultraviolet light systems to kill *Cryptosporidium*, which can survive more than 7 days in water that has been adequately disinfected with chlorine or bromine.

## More Information

- [Operation and Management of Splash Pads](#)
- [Swim Diapers and Swim Pants](#)
- [Steps for Healthy Swimming](#)

## References

1. [Surveillance for Waterborne Disease Outbreaks and Other Health Events Associated with Recreational Water — United States, 2007—2008](#). MMWR 2011; 60:1-32.

\* There is no evidence that *Naegleria fowleri* (commonly referred to as the “brain-eating amoeba”) causes infections in properly disinfected splash pads. It is very rare for people to become infected after entering inadequately disinfected aquatic venues such as splash pads and pools. This is the only known PAM case linked to an inadequately disinfected splash pad reported to CDC.

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