

Swimming Lessons in Private Pools: What you should know.....

Are you thinking of using your private residential pool for teaching swimming lessons, or for water-fitness classes?

Before you do, you should contact your insurance broker or agent about your insurance policy and liability coverage. Most homeowner policies do not cover activities such as teaching swimming lessons. You may need additional insurance to protect both you and your clients.

Recognized instructional courses, such as those offered through the Canadian Red Cross Water Safety Program must be taught by certified instructors. Make sure that you and any other instructors are qualified to teach!

You should also have an adult available during classes to help the instructor in case of an emergency. It is a good idea to contact the Workers' Compensation Board office in your area to see if they have any workplace requirements you need to follow.

A pool operator training course is highly recommended for anyone who wants to hold swimming classes in their own private pool. These courses cover topics ranging from keeping your pool clean and safe, to equipment operation and maintenance. Your local Environmental Health Officer may have a list of courses available in or near your community.

Health and Safety Tips:

Here are some important health and safety suggestions for private residential pools used for swimming lessons:

- The pool and pool-related facilities and equipment should be in a good state of repair.
- Make sure you have a non-slip deck surface to reduce the risk of slipping and falling. Non-slip products are available that will etch or coat the surface to reduce slipping. Check the Yellow Pages™.
- Outdoor swimming pools should always be completely surrounded by a fence, or wall, or other structure, to prevent young children from accidentally getting into the pool and drowning. It should be at least 4 feet (1.2 meters) high so a toddler can't jump up and reach the top. All gates or other entrances to the pool should be equipped with a self-closing latch, also out of reach of toddlers, and hardware that allows you to lock it permanently.
- Consider keeping class sizes to no more than 10 students in the pool at one time.
- Make sure the water in the swimming pool is always clear enough that you can easily see, from any point on the pool deck, either the main drain of the pool or, alternatively, a black disc 6 inches (15 centimeters) wide, on a white background, placed on the bottom of the pool at the deep end.

Test your water quality!

- Maintain a free chlorine residual at all times of at least 2 milligrams per litre (ppm) and a pH of 7.2 to 7.8.
- You should periodically have your pool water tested for bacteriological water quality by a certified lab (on a weekly basis

if it is used by large numbers of students), especially to make sure there are no *Pseudomonas* bacteria or total coliforms present. You should also have testing equipment available, at pool-side, for determining pH and chlorine levels, and use them regularly.

- The filtration and disinfection equipment in a typical private residential pool may not be as effective as the equipment used in public or commercial pools, which are used by large numbers of people. Your pool should be equipped with automatic chlorination equipment. **NOTE:** A chlorine “puck” in a skimmer basket may not provide an adequate level of chlorine in the pool water.
- Chemicals should be stored in a locked room, away from the immediate pool area.
- A washroom (toilet and hand basin) and dressing room should be available to students. If possible, have showers that students can use before they enter the pool.
- Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers, conspicuously posted, by the phone closest to the pool. Numbers should include the nearest available police, fire, ambulance, and/or rescue unit, and/or 911 (if available in your area).
- An adequate First Aid Kit should be available.

Lifesaving equipment...

You should have basic lifesaving equipment on hand at all times, including one or more of the following items:

- A light, strong, rigid pole not less than 12 feet (3.5 meters) in length, with a body hook on one end;
- A minimum one-quarter (1/4”) inch or 5 millimeter throwing rope at least one and one half (1 1/2) times longer than the maximum width of the pool. One end should be firmly attached to a ring buoy with an outside diameter of about 15 inches

(45 centimeters), or a similar flotation device.

Suction Hazards

Increasing the flow rate through your pool’s circulation system during swimming lessons may at first glance appear to be a good idea. However, a number of serious incidents have occurred where a person has been sucked onto or held against main drains, inlet fittings or skimmer openings. In some cases, children have been disembowelled by sitting on a main drain.

Drownings have also occurred where children’s hair has been sucked into a suction fitting, making it impossible for them to free themselves. Check all suction fittings to make sure they are designed so as to protect against suction accidents.

Please note:

Because private residential pools, including pools used for swimming lessons and “water-fit” classes, are exempt from the Pool Regulations, these pools will not be inspected, or given an operating permit, by Environmental Health Officers.

For further information on pool safety, see BC HealthFile [#39 Safety Tips for Swimmers](#).

For more BC HealthFile topics visit www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm, or visit your local public health unit.

Call the BC NurseLine to speak to a registered nurse, available 24-hours every day:

- In Greater Vancouver, call 604-215-4700
- In BC, call toll-free 1-866-215-4700
- Deaf and hearing-impaired, call 1-866-889-4700
- Pharmacist available 5pm to 9am every day
- Translation services in over 130 languages upon request.

Visit BC HealthGuide OnLine – a world of health information you can trust at www.bchealthguide.org