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WARM WEATHER BRINGS POTENTIAL FOR POOL CHEMICAL EXPOSURES: EXPERTS ARE AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO PREVENT AND MANAGE A POOL CHEMICAL EXPOSURE

Tips Provided by the Oklahoma Poison Center

OKLAHOMA CITY – Summer is here, which means backyard grilling, ice cream cones and swimming in the swimming pool. Whether you’re swimming at a local community pool or in your own backyard, keeping a swimming pool clean and properly maintained is important to limit waterborne illnesses. It’s also important to keep safety in mind when keeping up with pool maintenance.

Chlorine and chlorine derivatives are the most commonly used disinfectants to treat swimming pools. Maintaining good ventilation is important when working with pool chemicals, and you want to be sure to open the chemical container outside. Pay attention to the wind when placing powdered products into the pool. If it is too windy – wait until a less windy time to place the chemicals into the pool.

“Inhaling the dust from pool chemicals may cause coughing, choking, and shortness of breath. If the material gets into your eyes, it can cause tearing, redness, and eye irritation. Contact with your skin can cause redness, pain or even a chemical burn.” advises Oklahoma Poison Center Assistant Managing Director, Kristie Edelen.

As swimmers and pool owners, there are some preventative measures that can be taken to help keep the experience safe.

For swimmers, consider wearing swim goggles and practice sanitary swimming pool etiquette:

- Do not go into the water if you have diarrhea.
- Do not urinate or defecate in the pool.
- Rinse off in a shower before you enter the pool.
- Do not drink pool water.

For pool owners/operators:

- Use chlorinating agents according to the product instructions.

- Store pool chemicals in a COOL, DRY, WELL-VENTILATED area, away from other household products and garden chemicals.
- Keep children and pets out of the area when using pool chemicals.
- Use recommended protective equipment such as gloves or masks when handling hazardous products.
- Never mix chemicals of any kind together. An unexpected and uncontrollable reaction may occur.
- Designate measuring spoons/scoops for each product. Never place wet scoops back into any chemical container.
- Make sure that containers are tightly capped or sealed before you put them away and wash your hands after working with the products.
- Store products in the original container, up and out of reach, in a locked cabinet or location if possible.

If you or someone you know starts feeling irritation from pool chemicals or has any symptoms from the fumes, immediately move away from the water and into fresh air. If there is irritation to the skin, rinsing off in a shower should help reduce discomfort. If the eyes are red and burning from direct exposure, irrigation with water in a shower or at an eye station for 15 minutes is recommended. If anyone starts having trouble breathing, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness, or any persistent pain or discomfort of the skin or eyes, then seek medical attention immediately. These symptoms can be addressed at an emergency room with a breathing treatment and further eye irrigation.

Pharmacists and registered nurses at the poison center are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 222-1222. Please do not email the poison center or a member of the poison center staff, as poisoning emergencies are not handled through email. The Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy at the OU Health Sciences Center. For more information, log on to www.oklahomapoison.org.

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