

Floods - guidance for treating swimming pools

Community information

There are many issues that need to be considered when a swimming pool has been affected by floodwaters. Dangerous hazards, such as electrical safety and fencing, need to be assessed first to prevent accidental drowning. It is likely that the pool water will be heavily contaminated, so treatment is necessary to prevent growth of bacteria and breeding of pests such as mosquitoes.

Draining pool water

It is recommended that professional advice is sought before emptying in-ground swimming pools. After a flood the groundwater table is likely to be high so if a pool is emptied it can lift and become damaged.

Pre-Filtration

Flood affected pools may contain debris. Flocculants are chemicals that can be added to water to cause suspended particles to join together, forming larger particles (flocs). Flocculating your pool water before filtration is recommended for effective removal of suspended materials and to prevent your filter clogging. Flocculated material can be removed with a vacuum or other physical means such as skimming.

Filtration

Filtration can be used to remove the remaining visible matter in the pool. Filters need to be backwashed more frequently to help the process. This procedure should be conducted before chemical treatment.

Chemical treatment

Private pool owners should follow manufacturer's instructions relating to pool disinfection. Public aquatic facilities as defined in the [Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#) (the regulations) are required to ensure they maintain the water quality parameters set out below.

Table 1: Chlorinated Aquatic Facilities

| | Swimming pool where cyanuric acid is NOT used | Swimming pool where cyanuric acid is used | Spa Pool |
|--|---|---|----------|
| Free Chlorine (mg/L) minimum | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Combined Chlorine (chloramines) (mg/L) | Max. 1.0 mg/L, ideally < 0.2 mg/L. Must be less than the Free Chlorine level. | | |
| Total Chlorine (mg/L) maximum | 10 | 10 | 10 |

| | Swimming pool where cyanuric acid is NOT used | Swimming pool where cyanuric acid is used | Spa Pool |
|----|---|---|-----------|
| pH | 7.2 – 7.8 | 7.2 – 7.8 | 7.2 – 7.8 |

Table 2: Brominated Aquatic Facilities

| | Swimming pool | Spa Pool |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Free bromine (mg/L) minimum | 2 | 6 |
| Total bromine (mg/L) maximum | 8 | 8 |
| pH | 7.2 – 8.0 | 7.2 – 8.0 |

Cyanuric acid (outdoor aquatic facility only)

- If used, the maximum cyanuric acid level must not exceed 100mg/L, and should ideally be < 30 mg/L

Total alkalinity

- Total alkalinity in the water of the aquatic facility must be maintained above 60mg/L and should not be more than 200mg/L

Follow up samples

It is further recommended that aquatic facilities collect samples to ensure the microbiological standard of the water is within the following parameters:

- a heterotrophic colony count less than 100 colony forming units per millilitre;
- Escherichia coli* is not detected in 100 millilitres;
- Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is not detected in 100 millilitres.

Sampling can be organised via a NATA accredited laboratory.

Further information

Contact your local council or visit: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/water/aquatic-facilities>

Information on treating swimming pools after a flood go to the [Better Health Channel](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) <www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

To receive this document in another format, phone 1300 761 874, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email the Water Unit](mailto:water@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <water@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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