



Tests Reveal What's Really In Toronto Pool Water

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It's a warm summer day in the city and you're tempted to cool off in a local swimming pool.

But while you think about taking a dive, you may also want to think about what you're diving into.

When a Montreal media outlet recently tested the quality of pool water at various facilities in that city, they were shocked to discover many of them were high in bacteria, parasites and other dangerous contaminants.

The discoveries forced the province of Quebec to change the rules about when pools can open and two thirds of them were forced to temporarily shut down for clean-up.

Were Toronto's swimming holes equally suspect? CityNews decided to put our H2O to the test. We took samples from 11 outdoor pools and wading areas and sent them to Gelda Scientific Labs in Mississauga for a quick analysis.

The results? All but one passed with flying colours.

The failure was at Dufferin Grove Wading Pool near Dufferin and Bloor Sts.

E. coli levels in the water were at a worrisome 200 parts per 100 millilitres. That's twice what we'd allow on public beaches before shutting them down as unsafe for swimming.

"It's higher than the 100, which is the limit that we would expect for recreational water facilities," agrees the city's Reg Ayer. "There is a potential that you could end up with skin infections, ear and eye irritation and so on."

He pledges to take immediate action to fix the problem and vows it will be ready for public use by Thursday morning.

Still, many moms at the pool on Wednesday seemed unconcerned with the news, even as their youngsters trotted gleefully through the spritzing water.

"It doesn't really bother me," maintained Shirley Darling. "It's worth coming to cool off all summer long. It really is."

Wading pools are notorious for having such problems. Unlike a real pool, there isn't a shower to use before you get into it and little kids often run around the rest of the park, potentially and unwittingly picking up whatever contaminants may be there.

Wading pools are supposed to be drained twice a day and treated with chemicals to keep them clean. Best advice? Let your kids use them, but tell them to keep the water out of their mouths and don't let them go in if they have open sores.

Pools & The Results: How To Read The Numbers

E. coli is measured in parts per 100 millilitres. That's the level at which city officials close Toronto Beaches.

The numbers for fecal coliform are less standardized and because they don't present the same kind of health risk, a higher number isn't necessarily a more dangerous one.

Outdoor Pools

Alex Duff

E coli: 1

Fecal coliform: 1

Alexandra Park

E coli: 0

Fecal coliform: 0

Roding CC

E coli: 0

Fecal coliform: 0

Pine Point

E coli: 0
Fecal coliform: 0

Domenico DiLuca CC
E coli: 0
Fecal coliform: 0

Wading Pools

Alexandra Park
E coli: 7
Fecal coliform: 300

Christie Pitts
E coli: 15
Fecal coliform: 100

Dufferin Grove
E coli: 200
Fecal coliform: 300

Trinity - Bellwoods
E coli: 0
Fecal coliform: 0

West Lodge Park
E coli: 0
Fecal coliform: 0

Rexlington Park
E coli: 4
Fecal coliform: 25

What We Tested For

E. Coli

It comes with a long name - E. coli O157:H7 - and an even longer history in Canada.

E. coli is the bacteria that contaminated Walkerton's water supply in 2000. Seven people died from drinking the H2O and hundreds more were sickened.

For weeks, residents had to boil water to kill the nemesis because its effects can be lethal.

E. coli is present in our intestines and is used in our digestive systems. But when it gets into food, water or unpasteurized milk and ingested back into those same intestinal tracts, it can cause terrible illness. Some of that happens when raw sewage somehow gets into either the food chain or the water supply.

The results can be anything from abdominal cramps and diarrhea to kidney failure and death. But most people who come down with this kind of 'poisoning' get better within 5-10 days. Still, you wouldn't want to swim where it's present.

Fecal Coliform

As the name implies, this comes from fecal matter and doesn't generally pose a problem for people. But its presence indicates there are likely other disease-causing bacteria in the water, including the bugs that cause Hepatitis, dysentery and even typhoid.

Fecal coliforms don't last long in water and that makes them harder to detect. But officials know that if they're there, there's a problem that needs to be addressed quickly.

They can come from sewer back-ups and overflows and storm drains or runoffs.

Why doesn't chlorine take care of the problem?

The chemical additive is great, but it takes time to work. If there's not enough or if it's not allowed to do its work in killing the bugs, anyone who takes a premature dip is at risk.

Most bacteria can be neutralized within about an hour but some - like the stubborn Cryptosporidium - can hang on for days despite the presence of chlorine.

Health officials assure their standards are high and the contaminants are low in public pools across the G.T.A.

[\[SOURCE\]](#)

Big Calhoun

08-24-2006, 11:54 AM

Mental note to self...do not drink Canadian water, do not swim in Canadian pools.....CHECK!

LOL!

I should post what's in the water of Dallas County...I can't even pronounce half the stuff. I love my Brita filter!

All times are GMT -5. The time now is 09:51 AM.

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