

Drowning is the **eighth** leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1-17 years old in Georgia.¹ In 2022, 34 children in that age group drowned,² and there were 194 emergency room visits drowning and submersion.³ **Most drownings of children ages 1 to 4 happen in swimming pools.**

Water-Related Injuries in the U.S.

While the biggest threat to children around unexpected, unsupervised access to water is drowning, every year thousands of children are treated in the emergency room for non-fatal water-related injuries.⁴

Estimated Number of Emergency Room-Treated Nonfatal Pool or Spa Injuries, 2020-2022

	Younger than 5	5-14 years	Total <15 years
Average	4,800	1,500	6,300
2022	4,500	1,900	6,400
2021	5,500	1,300	6,800
2020	4,400	1,300	5,800

Source: U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:
National Electronic Injury Surveillance System

Swimming Pool Rules and Regulations

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for ensuring public swimming pools are clean, healthy, and safe. In addition to **adult supervision**, there are laws in place regarding fencing, pool drains, and clean water that are critical to pool safety.

Public Pool Barriers⁵

- All outdoor swimming pools and spas should have a barrier (e.g., fence, safety cover, wall, building wall, or a combination) which completely surrounds or covers the pool or space, and obstructs access.
- Top of the barrier should be at least 4 feet high.
- Pedestrian access gates should be self-closing and self-latching; other gates should have a self-latching device.

Public Pool Drains⁶

- Suction outlets must have been tested and meet approved standards.
- The main drain must be visible through the water from the pool edge.
- All drain covers and grates must meet appropriate standards.



Clean Water

Children under 4 years of age, and those not toilet-trained, are required to wear a swim diaper in a public swimming pool.⁷

HOWEVER IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

Swim diapers are not leak proof. Diarrhea-causing germs may be delayed from leaking into the water for a few minutes, but these germs still contaminate the water.⁸

Why are pool inspections important?

Germs that cause water illnesses can be spread in recreational settings when swallowing water that has been contaminated with **fecal matter**.⁹ Appropriate levels of disinfectants kill most germs within minutes, but some can survive for days.¹⁰

Germ ¹¹	Symptoms Can Include:	Time It Takes to Kill or Inactivate Germs in Chlorinated Water ¹⁶
E.coli O157:H7 Bacterium	Watery or bloody diarrhea, fever, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting ¹²	Less than 1 minute
Hepatitis A virus	Fever, headache, malaise, anorexia, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, dark urine, jaundice ¹³	About 16 minutes
Giardia parasite	Diarrhea, gas, greasy stools that tend to float, stomach or abdominal cramps, upset stomach or nausea/vomiting, dehydration (loss of fluids) ¹⁴	About 45 minutes
Crypto parasite	Watery diarrhea, stomach cramps or pain, dehydration, nausea, vomiting, fever, weight loss ¹⁵	About 10.6 days

*1 part per million (ppm) free chlorine at pH 7.5 or less and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher. Source: CDC

Swimming Pools in Georgia

To ensure minimum standards are met, DPH regularly inspects public swimming pools. Public swimming pools must have:¹⁷



A clearly labeled emergency shut-off valve



A trained operator perform a minimum of two weekly visits and document conditions



Regular collection of water samples to test



DPH's 7 Prevention Steps for Healthy and Safe Swimming¹⁸

- Closely supervise children in the water
- Don't swim when you have diarrhea
- Shower before you enter the pool
- Don't swallow the water you swim in
- Don't urinate in the water and always report fecal matter
- Don't swim if pool drain covers are missing, broken, or can't clearly be seen
- Report hazards to your local health department or environmental health office



References for Swimming Pool Safety

Suggested citation: Voices for Georgia's Children. (2023). Fact Sheet: Swimming Pool Safety. Voices for Georgia's Children. <https://adobe.ly/47AFvk4>.

- 1 Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Annual Report Preview (2022). Power Point Presentation received October 29, 2023.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Emergency Room Visits Web Query. Retrieved from Online Analytical Statistical Information System." Accessed November 13, 2023. <https://oasis.state.ga.us/oasis/webquery/qryER.aspx>.
- 4 U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. "Pool or Spa Submersion: Estimated Nonfatal Drowning Injuries and Reported Drownings, 2023 Report." Accessed September 24, 2023. <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/Pool-or-Spa-Submersion-Estimated-Nonfatal-Drowning-Injuries-and-Reported-Drownings-2023-Report.pdf?VersionId=aKdoueOfOpavIEc1E6FBLzYzIAKO8lyW>.
- 5 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Rules and Regulations: Public Swimming Pools, Spas, and Recreational Water Parks: Chapter 511-3-5." Accessed September 24, 2023. <https://rules.sos.ga.gov/gac/511-3-5>.
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Swim Diapers and Swim Pants." Accessed September 24, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/swimmers/swim-diapers-swim-pants.html>.
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- 17 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Rules and Regulations: Public Swimming Pools, Spas, and Recreational Water Parks: Chapter 511-3-5." Accessed October 28, 2022. <https://rules.sos.ga.gov/gac/511-3-5>.
- 18 Georgia Department of Public Health. "Health and Safe Swimming: Seven Prevention Steps for Healthy and Safe Swimming, Make a Splash: Share the Fun, Not the Germs." Accessed September 24, 2023. <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/health-and-safety-swimming-poster/download>.