

Water Recreation Program

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Steps to help prevent algae growth in pools that are closed

Algae can grow quickly in any pool or spa. Initially algae can make the pool appear cloudy or it may be visible on walls and stairs. Algae can be green, yellow, or black. Pools that are cloudy or green create visibility issues. Visibility issues increase the risk of drowning, even if the pool is closed. Someone in a cloudy or green pool cannot be seen. Untreated, stagnant (non-circulating) water in pools allows growth of algae, harmful bacteria and mosquito larvae. Once algae and other contaminants are present, they are difficult to remove. Algae can also damage circulation system equipment, which could lead to costly repairs.

Regular maintenance can prevent algae growth. It is important to maintain uncovered pools even while the facility is closed to bathers. Preventive tips to help eliminate algae growth are listed below.

- Daily test water chemistry and maintain following ideal conditions:
 - Chlorine 2-4 ppm
 - pH 7.2-7.6
 - Alkalinity 80-120 ppm
 - Calcium Hardness 200-400 ppm
 - Cyanuric Acid 30-50 ppm
 - Nitrates < 10 ppm
 - Phosphates < 100 ppb
- Circulation system is properly running
- Brush walls, steps, and floor weekly or more often as necessary
- Routinely vacuum pool
- Routinely clean skimmer baskets and pump strainers as necessary
- Routinely backwash filters or clean filter cartridges as necessary

Restoring water clarity in pools with severe algae is extremely challenging and requires intensive management. We recommend consulting a pool professional for assistance. Prompt efforts to restore proper water quality and clarity will help prevent unintentional drownings and other hazards. If repairs or improved water clarity cannot be done in a timely manner, we recommend installing a safety cover meeting the ASTM standard F1346-91.

Thank you for your efforts and cooperation as we work to ensure safety at water recreation facilities during this challenging time.

Links to resources that may be helpful

- [2020 News Splash newsletter](#), Public Health — Seattle & King County
- [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#), CDC
- [Guidance for Shutting Down and Reopening Water Recreation Facilities](#) (PDF), WA State Dept. of Health