

THE AQUATIC WATCH

Updates on Key Issues Facing the Aquatic Industry

AQUATIC WATCH, INC.
P.O. Box 15322
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
724-772-9950

management@aquaticwatch.com
www.aquaticwatch.com

The Aquatic Watch is distributed periodically by Aquatic Watch, Inc. for informational purposes only. The information contained herein should not be construed as legal advice.



Don't Let An Earache Spoil Your Summer! (March 2007)

Your child attends a swim party at a friend's house and the next day she complains that her ear is aching. It becomes painful to touch the outer portion of her ear and she also reports discomfort with she yawns or swallows. What is the cause of your child's pain?

Swimmer's Ear (Otitis Externa) is an inflammatory condition of the external ear canal commonly caused by a bacterial infection. The most common organisms responsible for this infection are *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Staph aureus*. The usual clinical presentation of this infection includes the following symptoms; ear pain, drainage, itching sensation in ear and/or hearing loss.



An external ear infection occurs when residual water is left in the ear canal after swimming or bathing causing irritation of the skin and creating an ideal environment for bacteria to grow. This condition can occur in both adults and children.

If an external ear infection is suspected, one should seek evaluation by their health practitioner. Treatment includes topical agents such as acidifying solutions, antibiotic drops and corticosteroid preparations. Oral antibiotics are usually reserved for severe external ear infections or patients with diabetes mellitus and compromised immune systems. The ear should be protected from water exposure during recovery from an external ear infection. Persons with active infection should avoid swimming for seven to ten days. To avoid water exposure while bathing, placing a cotton ball coated with petroleum jelly in the ear canal is usually effective.

Suggestions for the prevention of recurrent external otitis in swimmers includes "shaking" the ear dry after swimming and using drops containing alcohol and/or acetic acid to prevent skin maceration and reacidify the ear canal. Ear plugs are also often helpful for swimmers. Avoid putting objects in the ear (such as fingers, Q-tips or cotton swabs) that may scratch the ear canal and provide a site for infection.

Ask your certified pool operator about the chlorine and pH testing program at your pool. Pools with good chlorine and pH control are unlikely to spread Swimmer's Ear. For more information on Swimmer's Ear and how you can prevent it, visit the Center for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/swimmers_ear.htm.