



Aquatic Consulting Services

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Pool Tip #28: Swimmer Eye Irritation

Eye irritation is a major cause of bather discomfort and source of complaints about pools which is often incorrectly attributed to having too much chlorine in water. The most likely causes of eye irritation are: high chloramine levels (above 0.2 ppm) in the water, unbalanced water (Langelier Saturation Index out of the plus or minus 0.3 range), excessive debris or turbid water coming into contact with a swimmer's cornea, water friction against the cornea causing a disruption of the tear film, and air pollution (windblown debris, smog, or pollen).

Another frequently overlooked source of eye irritation is the sun. Swimmers often get eye burn from the sun reflection off the water. This problem can be exacerbated by swimming laps for long period of time in pools whose lap lanes run directly east and west. Remember, prolonged ultraviolet light exposure causes inflammation of the cornea and can lead to development of cataracts.

To prevent eye irritation, swim in only in properly maintained, sanitized, and balanced pools. Wear goggles while swimming. Use eye drops containing antihistamines after leaving the pool. Outdoors, wear good polarized goggles to filter out destructive rays of the sun while swimming, or sunglasses and a hat if participating in other water activities where your face is not submerged.