



# Focus on Do's and Don'ts of Draining your Pool

From Ecology's Water Quality Program

## For more information:

### Focus sheet online:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0610015.html>

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## Facts about swimming pool water

Chemicals used to maintain pools and spas can hurt plant and aquatic life in our streams. Even at extremely low amounts, these chemicals can be toxic to aquatic life. Swimming pool water can also affect our drinking water supply. In addition, some of this pollution can get into the food chain and affect the food that we eat.



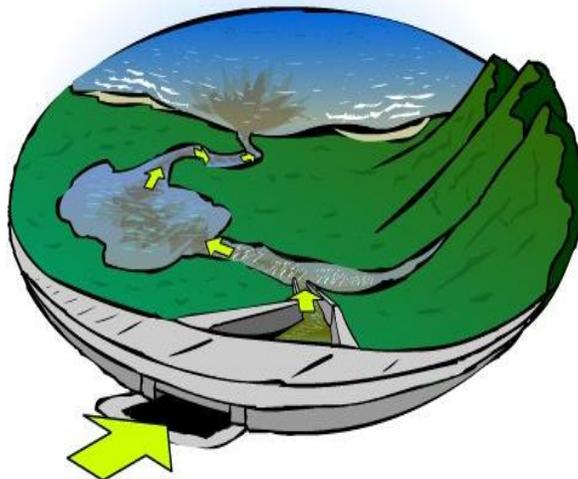
## Which pool and spa conditions harm aquatic life?

- Chlorine:** Sanitizes swimming pools and is very toxic to fish. Chlorine damages fish gills, which can cause fish to drown.
- Bromine:** Sanitizes swimming pools, but does not break down over time like chlorine does. In high doses it causes many of the same effects to fish as chlorine.
- Copper:** Used to kill algae in the filter system. It is very toxic to fish and can cause reproductive problems as well as tissue damage. This may also kill algae that aquatic life need to eat.
- pH:** Measures how acidic or basic water is. Ideal pH for aquatic life is between 7 and 8. Fish have a pretty narrow range of tolerance before they die. Many times the pH in pools is within this range, but because of the sudden shift from draining your pool fish can be injured or killed. Small rapid changes in pH can cause serious health problems for aquatic life.
- Temperature:** Pool water can be very warm compared to river and lake water. The sudden shift in temperature caused by draining pool water into the storm drain can affect the health and survival of aquatic life.



## What can you do to keep Washington's waters safe?

- 💧 **Do not pour pool or spa water into storm drains because they often flow to streams or lakes in your area.**
- 💧 **Allow your pool to sit for a week or longer before draining.** This will allow the chlorine in the water to break down to a less toxic level.
- 💧 **Send the backwash water from your filter to the sanitary sewer system.** This water contains high levels of contaminants that would harm streams or lakes.
- 💧 **Where can you send water drained from your pool or spa?**
  - The best place is down your sanitary sewer system. Most pools will have access to the sanitary sewer system either by utilizing the pool drain itself, or there will be an access tube in your yard near the pool that you can pump water into. This will allow it to be cleaned up in the city wastewater treatment plant.
  - If this option is not available, the next best place to put that water is on your yard. If you have a septic system, this is your best choice because most septic systems can't handle the volume of water that comes out of a swimming pool. Choose a spot that is not covered with plants because chlorine damages plants. Then make sure that the water is not running off onto another yard or into a storm drain. Soil does some cleansing of the water before it reaches ground water, creeks, or rivers.



**Follow these simple guidelines to keep Washington's waters clean.**

*If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact us at (509) 575-2490. For persons with a speech or hearing impairment, call 711 for relay service or 800-833-6388 for TTY.*