Do not use pools as a place to urinate, says IMA

- Watch out for telltale signs such as a string odor before stepping into a pool
- Important to follow hygienic practices to avoid infections

New Delhi, 13 July 2017: According to recent research, the smell of what many people think is chlorine in swimming pools may not be actually so. It is, instead, the smell of chemicals as the chlorine mixes with urine, feces, sweat, and dirt. Those who get a red eye and irritation after taking a dip in the pool should perhaps blame urine and not chlorine. In light of this, the IMA has advised people to not use pools as a place to urinate.

Urine combined with a lot of other waste can cause extreme dryness to the eyes as also chemical allergy. Healthy pools and water parks don’t have a strong chemical smell. Research also indicates that if the pH and disinfectant levels are appropriate, this chemical mix should not spell trouble.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "A mixture of urine and chlorine turns chlorine into an ammonia derivative called chloramine. This has a distinctive smell and can cause respiratory problems and eye infections. There is also an additional problem. Those with diarrhea can spread Cryptosporidium, which is a filter and chorine-resistant parasite and a leading cause of waterborne diseases in people who use a pool regularly. Some of the germs that cause diarrhea can live in the pool from minutes to days, even if the pool is well-maintained. Once contaminated, all it takes is for someone to swallow a small amount of pool water to get the infection. To eliminate the irritants caused by nitrogen-containing compounds found in urine, more chlorine may need to be added to a pool."

It is imperative to take along and use a pair of swimming goggles as part of your swimming attire. There are test strips available today that can help check chemical levels. It is possible to ease the allergic reaction using artificial tears with lubrication.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Indoor pools are riskier as the irritants can move into the air surrounding a pool and trigger coughing, wheezing, or even asthma attacks particularly in those with lower immunity. It is the responsibility of everyone who uses the pool to ensure that they
contribute to taking care of hygiene and sanitation. This can only happen if they maintain personal hygiene and even teach their children the same."

Here are some things you can do to ensure that the pool you are using is clean and safe.

- Watch out for a strong smell. Healthy and clean pools and water parks do not have a strong characteristic smell.
- Look at the pool to see whether it's clean and clear, and the drain is visible.
- Do not urinate in the water and ensure that your children are taught the same.
- Avoid swallowing the water.
- Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea.
- Shower immediately after using the pool.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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