



For Immediate Release

July 31, 2008

For More Information

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Summer Swimmers Need to Show Caution to Preserve a Healthy Smile

Now that summer is in full swing and the hot weather is upon us, many children and adults alike look to cool off in a nearby pool to beat the heat. But for many swimmers, excessive exposure to chlorine in the water and injuries occurring near the pool area might hurt their summer fun as well as their teeth, according to the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS).

Excessive exposure of the tooth enamel to chlorine, a chemical added to disinfect pools, may cause brownish discolorations, mainly on the front teeth. These discolorations are due to the acidic pH of the chlorine, which causes saliva proteins to break down and form deposits on the enamel. Swimmers can avoid this staining by brushing their teeth immediately after swimming.

“This will counteract the acidic pH from the chlorine,” says MDS member and Lexington general dentist Mary Jane Hanlon-Rogers, DMD. “Swimmers can have regular cleanings and whiten once a month to keep the staining under control.”

Dental and mouth injuries that happen near the pool are also common in the summer. Children and adults should be careful not to run near the pool, wear appropriate footwear to avoid slipping on wet surfaces, and also be very cautious when jumping and diving.

“I think the most important thing to remind swimmers is to be sure they know where they are before diving in,” says Dr. Hanlon-Rogers. “I have seen more accidents when a dive was too shallow and they hit the bottom or by coming up so close to the end of the pool that they hit their face and/or teeth.”

Exercising caution around pools this summer is a must to avoid any type of injury. “Playing around is a part of life,” adds Dr. Hanlon-Rogers. “However, accidents do happen when we are not paying attention.”

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The Massachusetts Dental Society is a 5,000-member professional association and statewide constituent of the American Dental Association.