

Formed stool and vomit contamination – public swimming pools and spa pools that use chlorine with or without cyanuric acid

Formed stool (faeces) and vomit contamination incidents pose a risk to the health of users. The only way to prevent the spread of disease is to immediately close the affected pool and undertake appropriate remediation.

Recommended remedial steps

1. Immediately close the pool and any other connected pools within the public swimming pools and spa pools and ensure staff involved in the response have appropriate personal protective equipment.
2. Remove the stool or as much of the vomit as possible using a bucket, scoop or another container that can be discarded or easily cleaned and disinfected. Dispose of the waste to the sewer. Do not use aquatic vacuum cleaners for removing the stool or vomit unless vacuum waste can be discharged to the sewer and the vacuum equipment can be adequately cleaned and disinfected. Ensure filtration and any secondary disinfection systems run until the end of the decontamination process.
3. For facilities that do not use chlorine stabiliser (cyanuric acid), raise the free chlorine concentration to a minimum of 3 mg/L and maintain that concentration for 25–30 minutes, making sure not to exceed a pH of 7.5. or for facilities that use chlorine stabiliser (cyanuric acid), raise the free chlorine concentration to a minimum of 4 mg/L and maintain that concentration for 50 minutes, making sure not to exceed a pH of 7.5.
4. If the filtration system incorporates a coagulation step, ensure coagulant concentration is correct to enhance the filtration process.
5. Backwash filter media or replace the filter element as appropriate. Precoat filter media should be replaced.
6. Ensure the water is balanced.
7. Hygienically clean, disinfect or dispose of materials, tools, equipment or surfaces that have come into contact with contaminated water.
8. Record the incident and remedial action taken.
9. Reopen the pool.

Note that no remedial action is required for blood in the water provided an appropriate primary disinfectant residual is present.

In major contamination events it may be necessary to submit a sample of the water to show it is free of microbiological contamination before reopening. public swimming pools and spa pools operators should contact Public Health Unit for advice.