



HOLY FAMILY
PARISH

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Hidden Dangers In Health Clubs

*O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I offer You all my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day....*

Joining a health club can make it easier and more fun to exercise. But gyms can also present problems. Bacteria in poorly maintained pools can spread disease. Antibiotic resistant staph infections can be picked up in crowded locker rooms from heavily used equipment. You can be injured or even suffer an exercise related heart problem. Here's how to minimize those risks.

Skin Infections: Staph infections, including those caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) bacteria, can spread through shared gym equipment, mats, and towels. Infections tend to occur near a cut or scrape, or on certain body parts (the armpits, buttocks, groin, and neck). They may start as a large pimple that can swell, become painful, and produce pus. If they spread to your bloodstream, it can be life-threatening. Many clear up on their own, but seek medical attention if a fever develops or if the area becomes enlarged, red, tender, or warm.

Prevention: Use alcohol spray or wipes most gyms provide to wipe off equipment before and after use. Place a clean towel over mats used for doing sit-ups, stretching, or yoga. Do not share towels with others. Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based sanitizer. Shower after working out. If you have a cut or scrape, keep it covered with a clean adhesive bandage and do not use hot tubs or whirlpools.

Dirty Pools: Poorly maintained swimming pools, kiddie pools, hot tubs, and soaking pools are common, allowing bacteria and viruses to cause outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness. Inspections at 3,666 health clubs in 13 states found serious lapses requiring the immediate closing of 10 % of the pools, according to a May 2010 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Improperly maintained circulation and filtering systems and inadequate disinfection were among the most common problems.

Prevention: To protect others, shower with soap before swimming, wash your hands after using the toilet, or changing a baby's diaper. Do not use the pool if the water has a strong chemical smell or appears cloudy. Pool water should have little odor and be clear enough to easily see the bottom. Ask employees about chlorine and pH levels, which should be checked at least twice a day, and the latest pool inspection score. Or use do-it-yourself test strips, available at many home improvement stores. Chlorine should be in the range of 1-3 parts per million (4-6 ppm for hot tubs), and pH should be in the range of 7.2-7.8.

Eye Injuries: Americans suffer more than 40,000 eye injuries a year during recreational activities. Racquetball, squash and tennis are leading causes of sports-related eye injuries among people between 25 and 65. Nearly all could be prevented if people wore adequate eye protection.

Prevention: People engaged in high risk activities should wear protective eyewear with 3-mm polycarbonate lenses and an impact-resistant sports frame meeting the ASTM F803-01 standard. If you regularly wear glasses, you should get a prescription pair of sports glasses that meet those criteria.

Other hidden health club dangers requiring medical attention (among people 45 and older) are strained muscles. Warm up a few minutes before jogging, calisthenics, or light and easy lifts. Use resistance machines or elastic bands rather than free weights. Heart attacks are another danger to be aware of during exercise. Exercise gradually builds protection against heart attack. If you are not in good shape a vigorous workout can temporarily increase the risk of exercise-related cardiac events. Be sure your gym has the proper emergency equipment and personnel properly trained for an emergency. **A safety measure to take to the gym:** consider taking a class in Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), so you can help others during an emergency. The life you help to save may be your friend or loved one.

From Consumer Reports on Health, Shaping Up, Hidden Dangers In Health Clubs. November 2010. A Healthy & Safe New Year, Parish Nurse.

God bless you, Your Holy Family Parish Nurse.

To contact Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry call 330-688-6412, ext. 462 or view at www.holyfamilystow.org.