



Hamilton Watershed  
Stewardship Program

A Program of:



## Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program

# Environmentally Friendly Pool Drainage Practices



Photo courtesy of <https://www.flickr.com/photos/centermez/7009445183>

### Key Points for Draining your Pool the Right Way

- Do not drain chlorinated water or saltwater into storm sewers or directly into creeks as this can kill aquatic organisms
- Drain water across your lawn to increase absorption into the ground
- Allow your pool to dechlorinate before draining by not adding chemicals for 1 to 2 weeks
- Never drain your pool on a rainy day

The chemicals we use to keep swimming pools clean and safe for recreational swimming such as chlorine, bromine, salt and algaecide can be harmful to our natural environment. Improper drainage of swimming pools can lead to these chemicals being transported into the ravines, creeks and lakes where they are toxic, even deadly to fish and aquatic insects.

Outdoor swimming pools require maintenance involving backwashing and winterizing and chemicals are important for maintaining safe swimming conditions. To maintain a healthy natural environment, these steps should be taken to responsibly maintain a pool.

**Dechlorinate** the water before draining by not adding chemicals for a week or longer. The chlorine will naturally dissipate. Adding a dechlorination tablet or leaving the pumps running can accelerate the process.

**Test your water** to ensure that chemical levels are as low as possible before draining.

**Drain onto your lawn.** When backwashing or winterizing, drain the water onto your lawn. This will allow the water to infiltrate and slowly make its way to our natural environment while also allowing sediments in the water to settle out. Avoid draining water into streams, ravines or forested areas as this can cause soil erosion and slope failures.

**It comes down to being a good neighbour. Any pool discharge water is wastewater, and should be dealt with responsibly by pool owners.**

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## Salt Water Pools

If you cannot slowly drain the water from your saltwater pool onto your lawn where it can be absorbed, it should be drained to the **sanitary sewer**.

For large pool drawdowns you may need to consider having the water hauled out for proper treatment.

Never drain a saltwater pool into a ravine or creek. The chloride levels in salt water pools can be as high or higher than average ocean salinity. These levels are toxic to our native freshwater aquatic organisms.

### Pool Drainage Practices to AVOID

1. Disposing of chemical laden pool water into the natural environment
2. Discharging shocked pool water before the chemicals have had a chance to evaporate
3. Allowing your pool water to drain onto neighbours' property including Conservation Authority lands



### Understanding our Sewer System and Natural Infrastructure

Sinks and toilets in urban areas drain into the **sanitary sewer** system which is treated at a wastewater plant before draining into Lake Ontario.



The catch basins on your street collect water in the **storm sewer** and drain, untreated, directly into your neighborhood creek. The creek is used as **natural infrastructure** to drain water into Lake Ontario.

## How Can You Help?

You can help by responsibly discharging your pool water and, in turn, protecting the natural areas around your property, along with the health of your local watershed. If you have any questions, please contact the Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program. This program works with landowners to encourage good stewardship, with particular focus on the protection, enhancement and rehabilitation of natural areas, streams and groundwater resources.



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**Interested in learning  
more about natural  
features on your property?**

**Call us to arrange a free  
on-site consultation!**