TECHNICAL INFO SHEET

The use of "phosphate removers" in swimming pool water

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If you own a swimming pool, you've likely heard the myth that you need to regulate your pool's phosphate concentration in order to prevent algae growth. A recent blog post by The Pool Butler, **Phosphate Remover Fact and Fiction** [1], does a great job of explaining why that's not true. Algae growth in swimming pools is prevented by basic pool maintenance, including chlorination or other chemical sanitization, and debris removal.

What are phosphates and why are they in my pool?

A phosphate is a chemical compound of phosphorus and oxygen, both naturally occurring elements which are present almost ubiquitously in the environment as well as the human body[2] . Phosphates contain essential nutrients that are necessary for human, animal, and plant life. We use phosphates every day in food and industrial applications, so they're just as likely to be in the sandwich you ate for lunch as they are in your pool water.

Phosphates might be introduced to your pool through water from municipal sources or by the dirt and leaves and other debris that naturally collect in your pool over time. Over the past couple of decades, a popular myth has circulated among swimming pool owners which claims that excessive accumulation of phosphates can feed algae blooms in pools, and that special "phosphate removers" are needed to prevent this from happening. The fact is, swimming pools are carefully maintained bodies of water--as long as you are regularly cleaning your pool and performing basic maintenance, there's no reason to worry about algae overgrowth.

Why shouldn't I use phosphate removers in my pool?

There are plenty of other reasons why your pool doesn't need phosphate removers. Namely, if your pool water comes from a well or otherwise contains excessive copper or iron, you likely use a metal sequestrant to prevent these metals from turning your pool water an unappealing color[3]. The most effective metal sequestrants are formulated with phosphates, which bind these metals and allow them to be filtered out of your pool water. If you were to use a phosphate remover, you would just be taking out the sequestrant and negating its helpful action—not only does that make no sense, it's also a waste of your money!

In short, there's no reason to fall for the misinformed hype surrounding phosphate removers. Regular cleaning and maintenance is all you need to ensure that your swimming pool stays safe, clean, and enjoyable. This includes monitoring the pH and chlorine concentration of your pool water, along with effective filtration and regular use of an algaecide[4]. If you have questions about phosphates and their role in our modern world, check out the Phosphate Forum of the Americas for helpful information.

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[1] Phosphate Remover Fact and Fiction | It All Started With Soap (thepoolbutler.net)
[2] WHAT ARE PHOSPHATES? | PhosphateFacts (phosphatesfacts.org)
[3] The Truth About Phosphates in Pool Water (swimuniversity.com)
[4] Pool Algae Guide | In The Swim