

## Keeping Children Safe in and Around Water



Playing in the pool, the ocean, and even the bathtub can be good fun and exercise for a child. But did you know that a child can drown in only an inch of water? Hundreds of kids drown each year, so practicing good water safety is critical. Three important things you can do to keep your child safe are:



- Always supervise your child in the water—even if your child knows how to swim.
- If you have a pool, use multiple barriers to keep your child away from the pool when you're not around. A four-sided fence is an ideal barrier.
- Learn CPR.

An easy way to help keep your child safe is to learn infant and child CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). This simple skill could save your child's life:

- All caregivers, including grandparents, should know CPR.
- To find a class, check for one given by your local [Red Cross chapter at www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org). You can also find the [American Heart Association course catalog at cpr.heart.org/en/course-catalog-search](http://cpr.heart.org/en/course-catalog-search). You can also contact your local fire department for CPR classes.

## Swimming safety tips

### Supervise at all times

Here are suggestions for supervision:

- Have a "water watcher" while kids are swimming. This adult's sole job is to watch the kids. He or she should not talk on the phone, read, or cook while supervising.
- For young children, make sure an adult is in the water, within an arm's distance of kids.
- Make sure all adults who supervise children know how to swim.

- If a child can't swim, pay extra attention while supervising. Also don't rely on inflatable toys to keep your child afloat. Instead, use a Coast Guard-certified life jacket. And make sure the child stays in shallow water where his or her feet reach the bottom.
- Have children wear a Coast Guard-certified life jacket whenever they are in or around natural bodies of water, even if they know how to swim. This includes lakes and the ocean.

## Have your child take swimming lessons

Here are suggestions for lessons:

- Give lessons according to your child's developmental level, and when he or she is ready. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends starting lessons for many children at age 1.
- Make sure lessons are ongoing and given by a qualified instructor.
- Keep in mind that a child who has had lessons and knows how to swim can still drown. Take safety precautions with every child.

## Make sure every child follows these swimming rules

Share these rules with all children in your care:

- Only swim in designated swimming areas in pools, lakes, and other bodies of water.
- Always swim with a buddy, never alone.
- Never run near a pool.
- Dive only when and where it's posted that diving is OK. Never dive into water if posted rules don't allow it, or if the water is less than 9 feet deep. And never dive into a river, a lake, or the ocean.
- Listen to the adult in charge. Always follow the rules.
- If someone is having trouble swimming, don't go in the water. Instead try to find something to throw to the person to help him or her, such as a life preserver.

## Follow these other safety tips

Other tips include:

- Have swimmers with long hair tie it up before they go swimming in a pool. This helps keep the hair from getting tangled in a drain.
- Keep toys out of the pool when not in use. This prevents your child from reaching for them from the poolside.
- Keep a phone near the pool for emergencies.
- Don't allow children to swim outdoors during thunderstorms or lightning storms.

## Swimming pool safety

### Inground pools

Tips for inground pool safety include:

- Use several barriers, such as fences and doors, around the pool. No barrier is 100% effective, so using several can provide extra levels of safety.

- Use a four-sided fence that is at least 4 feet high. It should not allow access to the pool directly from the house.
- Use a self-closing fence gate. Make sure it has a self-latching lock that young children can't reach.
- Install loud alarms for any doors or gates that lead to the pool area.
- Tell kids to stay away from pool drains. Also make sure you use drain covers that prevent entrapment and have a valve turn-off. This means the drain pump will turn off if something gets caught in the drain. And use an approved drain cover.

## Above-ground pools

Tips for above-ground pool safety include:

- Follow the same barrier recommendations as for inground pools (see above).
- Make sure ladders are not left down in the water when the pool is not in use.
- Keep children out of hot tubs and spas. Kids can easily overheat or dehydrate. If you have a hot tub or spa, use an approved cover with a lock.

## Kiddie pools

Tips for kiddie pool safety include:

- Empty them of water after every use, no matter how shallow the water is.
- Always supervise children, even in kiddie pools.

## Other water safety tips

### At home

Tips for at-home water safety include:

- Don't use electrical appliances near water.
- Use toilet seat locks.
- Empty all buckets and dishpans when not in use. Store them upside down.
- Cover ponds and other water sources with mesh.
- Get rid of all standing water in the yard.

### At the beach

Tips for water safety at the beach include:

- Supervise your child at all times.
- Only go to beaches where lifeguards are on duty.
- Be aware of dangerous surf that can pull down and drown your child.
- Be aware of drop-offs, where the water suddenly goes from shallow to deep. Tell children to stay away from them.

- Teach your child what to do if he or she swims too far from shore: stay calm, tread water, and raise an arm to signal for help.

## While boating

Tips for boating safety include:

- Have your child wear a Coast Guard-approved life vest at all times. And have him or her practice swimming while wearing the life vest before going out on a boat.
- Check with your state about the age a person must be to operate personal watercraft or any water vehicle with a motor. Each state is different.

## If an accident happens

If your child is in a water accident, every second counts. Do the following right away:

- Yell for help, and carefully pull or lift the child out of the water.
- If you're trained, start CPR, and have someone call 911 or emergency services. If you don't know CPR, the 911 operator will instruct you by phone.
- If you're alone, carry the child to the phone and call 911, then start or continue CPR.
- Even if the child seems normal when revived, get medical care.

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