

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.**
- **If possible, learn CPR.**

Read on for more details on keeping your child safe in and around water.

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 by visiting www.redcross.org/services/hss/courses. Or contact your local fire department for CPR classes.



A fence with the features shown above is an effective way to keep children away from a swimming pool.

Swimming Safety Tips

- Supervise at all times.
 - Have a “water watcher” while kids are swimming. This adult’s sole job is to watch the kids. He or she should avoid talking on the phone, reading, or cooking 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 your child take swimming 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 after a child’s fourth birthday.
 - 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:
 - 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 okay. 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 them out, such as a life preserver.
- Follow these other safety tips:
 - 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.
 - Do not allow children to swim outdoors during thunderstorms or lightning storms.

Swimming Pool Safety

- Inground pools:
 - 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 4-sided fence that is at least 5 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 have a dual drain with 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:
 - 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:
 - 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:
 - 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:
 - 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:
 - 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.
 - Don't allow kids age 16 and under to operate personal watercraft. These include any vehicles with a motor, such as jet skis.

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.