



Water Safety



Pools, lakes, ponds, and beaches mean summer fun and cool relief from hot weather. But water also can be dangerous for kids if you don't take the proper precautions. Nearly 1,000 kids die each year by drowning. And most drownings occur in home swimming pools. It is the second leading cause of accidental death for people between the ages of 5 and 24.

The good news is there are many ways to keep your kids safe in the water and make sure that they take the right precautions when they're on their own.

Keeping Kids Safe

Kids need **constant supervision** around water — whether the water is in a bathtub, a wading pool, an ornamental fish pond, a swimming pool, a spa, the beach, or a lake.

Young children are especially vulnerable — **they can drown in less than 2 inches** (6 centimeters) of water. That means drowning can happen where you'd least expect it — the sink, the toilet bowl, fountains, buckets, inflatable pools, or small bodies of standing water around your home, such as ditches filled with rainwater. Always watch children closely when they're in or near any water.

If you don't already, it's a good idea to learn how to swim, and kids older than 4 years should learn, too (check the local recreation center for classes taught by qualified instructors). Kids who are younger (but older than age 1) also might benefit from swimming lessons, but check with your doctor first.

Don't assume that a child who knows how to swim isn't at risk for drowning. All kids need to be supervised in the water, no matter what their swimming skill levels. And infants, toddlers, and weak swimmers should have an adult swimmer within arm's reach to provide "touch supervision."

Invest in proper-fitting, Coast Guard-approved flotation devices (life vests) and use them whenever a child is near water. Check the weight and size recommendations on the label, then have your child try it on to make sure it fits snugly. For kids younger than 5 years old, choose a vest with a strap between the legs and head support — the collar will keep the child's head up

and face out of the water. Inflatable vests and arm devices such as water wings are not effective protection against drowning.

The temperature of the water is important, too. Enter the water slowly and make sure it feels comfortable for you and your child. A temperature below 70°F (20°C) is cold to most swimmers. Recommended water temperatures vary depending on the activity, swimmer's age, and whether or not they are pregnant. In general, 82°-86°F (28°-30°C) is comfortable for recreational swimming for children (babies are more comfortable when the water is on the warmer side of this temperature range).

Body temperature drops more quickly in water than on land, and it does not take long for hypothermia to set in. If a child is shivering or experiencing muscle cramps, get him or her out of the water immediately.

To learn more about water safety, please visit:
<http://www.drowningpreventionfoundation.org/>

Have a SAFE and Fun Summer!