

Be Water Wise

Your guide to family safety in the water



When the weather turns warm, everyone wants to be in or around the water. Hanging out at the pool or the beach is great fun for the family. While having fun, most people don't think much about water safety—but they should. According to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death in children younger than 5 years old. It doesn't have to be this way. Most water-related accidents can be avoided by knowing how to stay safe and following a few simple guidelines:

Home

- Never leave the room when children are in the bathtub.
- Be aware that a baby bath-seat or bath-ring does not provide protection from drowning.
- Empty and turn over all buckets and inflatable pools as soon as you are done using them.
- Learn CPR.

Swimming

- Ensure that all adults and children in your household learn how to swim.
- Teach children to always swim with a buddy.
- Teach water safety rules to children.
- Actively watch children when they are swimming, even if they know how to swim. Do not leave, even for a moment.
- Keep a phone near you while watching children swim—use it only to call for help if there is an emergency.
- Keep children who cannot swim, or cannot swim well, within your reach.

Pools

- Put up a fence that is at least 4 feet high and surrounds all sides of the pool area. Ensure that the fence has a gate with a lock and that the gate closes and latches on its own.
- Teach children not to play or swim near pool or spa drains.
- Have alarms on every door and window leading to the pool area.

Open Water

- Ensure that children only swim in areas designated for swimming.
- Teach children to enter the water feet-first.
- Ensure that children wear a United States Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times when in or near open bodies of water.

Contact Us

For more information, contact Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Injury Prevention Program at **616.391.SAFE** (7233) or visit helendevoschildrens.org/injuryprevention. If you have questions, email: injuryprevention@helendevoschildrens.org.

Facts from the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission

- Each year, more than 830 children ages 14 and younger die as a result of unintentional drowning.
- On average, 3,600 injuries per year occur in children due to near-drowning incidents.
- Home swimming pools are the most common place for a child age 5 or younger to drown.
- The majority of infant drowning deaths in children younger than 1 year old occur in bathtubs, buckets, or toilets.