

Learning About Water Safety for Children



How can you keep your child safe around water?

Children are naturally curious and can be drawn to water. Young children can also move faster than you think. Use these tips to help keep your child safe around water when you're outdoors and at home.

- Be prepared for all situations.
Have children alert an adult in an emergency. Show your child how to call **911** if an adult isn't nearby. Have all adults and older children learn CPR.
- Keep your child within arm's length in or near water.
Child drownings often happen in bathtubs when adults look away even for a moment. Monitor your child by touch, and always know where they are. If you need to leave the water, take your child with you.
- Assign an adult "water watcher" to pay constant attention to children.
The water watcher's only job is to watch children in or near water. If you're the water watcher, put down your cell phone and avoid other activities. Trade off with another sober adult for breaks.
- Teach your child about water safety rules from a young age.
Make sure your child knows to swim with an adult water watcher at all times. Teach your child not to jump into unknown bodies of water. Also teach them not to push or jump on others who are in the water. When you're in areas with posted water rules, read and explain the rules to your child. If your child is old enough, ask them to read the posted rules to you. Ask them what these rules mean to them.
- Block unsupervised access to water.
Putting fences around pools and locks on doors to pools, hot tubs, and bathrooms adds another layer of safety. Many child drownings happen quickly and quietly. Getting an alarm for your pool can alert you if a child enters the water without your knowing. Take precautions even if your child is a strong swimmer. A child can drown in as little as 1 in. (2.5 cm) of water. Be sure to empty containers of water around the house and yard to help keep children safe.
- Start swim lessons as soon as your child is ready.

Learning to swim can be the best way for your child to stay safe in the water. Swim lessons can start with children as young as 1 year old. Parent-child water play classes are available for children as young as 6 months old. The class can help your child get used to being in the pool. But how will you know when your child is ready? If you're not sure, your pediatrician can help you decide what's right for your child. Look for lessons through the Red Cross and local gyms like the YMCA.

- Use life jackets, and make sure they fit right.
Your child's life jacket should be comfortably snug and should be approved by the U.S. Coast Guard. Water wings, noodles, and other air-filled or foam toys aren't a replacement for a life jacket. Make sure you know where your child is in the water, even if they're wearing a life jacket.
- Be mindful of exhaust from boats and generators.
You might not expect it, but carbon monoxide from boat exhaust can cause you and your child to pass out and drown. Be careful of breathing boat exhaust when you wait on the dock, sit near the back of a boat, and are near idling motors.
- Model safe rule-following behavior.
Children learn by watching adults, especially their parents. Teach your child to follow the rules by doing it yourself. Show them that honoring safety rules is part of having fun.

Where can you learn more?

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