



## SWIMMING SAFETY

### **Fast Facts about Swimming Safety**

- Drowning is a serious danger for children
- Following safety rules can help prevent injuries and death

### **Swimming Safety is Important**

- According to the Centers for Disease Control (or CDC) swimming is the most popular recreational activity for children, but it is not without dangers.
- Drowning is one of the leading causes of death among children
- Each year more than 1,000 children under the age of 19 drown
- Most parents don't realize that drowning can occur in less than 2 minutes and that children can drown in as little as one inch of water
- Diving accidents can also cause serious injuries or death

### **Swimming is Good Exercise**

- Swimming is great exercise for children and teens.
  - Swimming is a great cardiovascular workout for kids that promotes heart and lung health.
  - Swimming can also improve strength and flexibility, increase endurance and improve posture and balance.
  - Swimming places less stress on the bones, joints and connective tissue than other types of exercise.
  - The CDC reports that swimming is also a great way to prevent childhood obesity.

### **Preventing Injuries at the Pool**

- Here are some ways to swim safely and prevent injuries in the pool:
  - A qualified adult or lifeguard should watch children at all times.
  - Don't let electrical appliances get close to the pool to prevent electric shock.
  - Create and enforce pool safety rules such as:
    - No running on the pool deck;
    - No swimming during a storm;
    - No diving into shallow water.

### **Diving Safety Rules**

- Diving is another way children can be injured while swimming:
  - Fractures, bruises, serious spinal cord injuries, brain injuries and even death can occur if swimmers don't practice safe diving habits.
  - Swimming lessons are a great way to teach children the knowledge and skills needed to dive safely.
- Some Safety rules that can help prevent injury while diving include:
  - No diving into shallow water or above ground pools.
  - Never dive into cloudy or unknown waters such as a lake. If you cannot see the bottom, always enter the water feet first. There may be rocks or partially submerged logs floating just beneath the water's surface.
  - Never swim or dive alone.

### **Beach and Lake Safety**

- Some other safety rules to follow while swimming in lakes, oceans or public swimming areas are:
  - Make life jackets a "MUST". Don't allow children to ride in boats or swim in large bodies of water without a life jacket. Adults should also wear life jackets in the lake or ocean for their own protection and to set an example for children.
  - Never swim alone; use the buddy system.
  - Don't swim near boats that are passing by because they may not be able to see a swimmer, especially if they are pulling a water-skier or tuber.
  - Don't swim near people fishing to prevent injuries from a fish hook.
  - No diving into the ocean headfirst; it can cause head or neck injuries.
  - Wear protective footwear when swimming in a lake. Glass and other sharp object can be on the bottom.
    - Cuts from lakes and streams can become infected.
    - Watch for signs of infections in cuts. There are germs in lakes and streams that can make you sick.
    - For large cuts seek medical advice and for smaller cuts watch for redness and swelling.
  - As always, be sure there is a responsible adult or lifeguard to watch over your child.

### **Flotation Devices**

- Life jackets and life preservers help keep children safe in the water.
  - Be sure to pick the right size for your child by checking the label and choosing the right jacket based on your child's weight.
  - Choose flotation devices approved by the US Coast Guard and tested by Underwriters Laboratory
  - A life jacket is never a substitute for adult supervision
  - Go to [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) for more tips on choosing the right life jacket or life preserver

### **Pool Fences and Gates**

- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, most young children who drown in pools wander out of the house and fall into the pool by accident.
- Pool fences can help prevent these types of accidents.
- Pool fences should be around all four sides of the pool and be at least 4 feet high.
- Pool fences should also be climb resistant. Don't put tables and chairs close to the fence to prevent children from climbing over the fence.
- The pool gate must have a latch that is out of reach of children and a latch that is self-closing and self-latching.



### **Water Safety for Small Children**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that an adult should always be within arm's reach when infants, toddlers or small children are in or around the water.
- Parents should avoid using inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life jackets.
- Don't allow small children to dive head first down a slide or through inner tubes or pool toys.
- In the water, seconds count. Rescue a child quickly and re-start the breathing process immediately. Get emergency medical help right away if your child has been rescued from water.

### **Water Safety for Teens**

- When the weather gets hot, teenagers love to spend time in the pool or at the beach.
- Drowning ranks as a leading cause of death for this age group so be sure to talk with your teenager about water safety.
- Teens should not engage in rough horseplay or swim in unfamiliar waters. Talk with your teen about alcohol and drugs. Alcohol is involved in many water-related injuries and up to half of all water-related deaths. In fact, one half of all adolescent male drownings are tied to alcohol use.
- Sign your teenager up for CPR classes. In an emergency, these skills can help save lives. Check with the YMCA or YWCA, your local hospital or Red Cross for more information about classes.

### **Why Swimming Lessons Work**

- Swimming lessons are a great way to teach your child water safety and reduce their risk of injury or death.
- Kids learn a healthy respect for the water and important skills like:
  - Safe ways to enter and exit a pool;
  - Proper diving techniques.
- Teaching your kids to swim gives them a life-long that can help ensure their future safety around water.

### **Other Important Safety Tips**

- Some other important reminders to keep your kids safe around the water:
  - Wear at least 30 SPF sunscreen and re-apply every half hour to prevent sunburns;
  - Keep rescue equipment, first aid supplies and a telephone by the pool;
  - If you use a pool cover, it should cover the entire pool so children can't slip under it;
  - Be sure that supervising adults are free from distractions:
    - No talking on the phone, socializing or performing chores.

### **Sources for More Information**

- **Kids Health**  
[http://kidshealth.org/kid/feel\\_better/things/casts.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/feel_better/things/casts.html)
- **The National Travel Safety Institute**  
<http://ntsi.com/quick-links/safety-articles/swimming-safety-tips/>
- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/>
- **Safe Kids**  
[www.safekids.org/Child-Water-Safety](http://www.safekids.org/Child-Water-Safety)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics**  
[www.aap.org/](http://www.aap.org/)

**Our orthopaedic providers can help answer more questions about swimming safety.  
Call our office at (404) 321-9900 for an appointment!**