

Water Safety

Drowning claims the lives of over 4,000 people every year. Although all age groups are represented, children 0-4 have the highest death rate due to drowning.

In 1998, 500 children under the age of five drowned. Most drowning and near-drowning happen when a child falls into a pool or is left alone in the bathtub. The National Safety Council encourages adults to establish and adhere to strict water safety rules.

Never leave a child alone near water—at the pool, the beach or in the tub—a tragedy can occur in seconds. If you must leave, take your child with you.

Always use approved personal flotation devices (life jackets.) The U.S. Coast Guard estimates nearly 9 of 10 drowning victims were not wearing one.

Beware of neighborhood pools—be it your own or your neighbors. Remove toys from in and around the pool when not in use. Toys can attract children to the pool.

For pools, barriers can offer added protection against drowning. Power or manual covers will completely cover a pool and block access to the water, however, be sure to drain any standing water from the surface of the pool cover as a child can drown in very small amounts of water.

Enroll children over age three in swimming lessons taught by qualified instructors. But keep in mind that lessons don't make your child "drown-proof."

Older children risk drowning when they overestimate their swimming ability or underestimate the water depth.

Teach your children these four key swimming rules:

- Always swim with a buddy.
- Don't dive into unknown bodies of water. Jump feet first to avoid hitting your head on a shallow bottom.
- Don't push or jump on others.
- Be prepared for an emergency.

Never consume alcohol when operating a boat.

Always have a first-aid kit and emergency phone contacts handy. Parents should be trained in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).