

**Northwest**

Water safety

For many families, visits to the community pool, water park, river, or beach are essential rituals of the summer experience. But smooth waters can turn to rough ones when basic water safety is ignored. Two-thirds of all drownings occur between May and August.

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 14 and under, with children under age 5 at the highest risk. Many drownings and near-drownings occur when children are left unattended by a pool or in the bathtub.

Adults and kids over age 13 should learn infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in the event of a near-drowning. Parents and caregivers should also develop and practice an emergency routine. The National SAFE KIDS Campaign, the Oregon SAFE KIDS Coalition, and Kaiser Permanente offer the following safety tips to prevent drownings.

Water safety at the swimming pool

A pool is 14 times more likely than a motor vehicle to be involved in the death of children ages 4 and under. And 60 to 90 percent of drownings occur in residential pools.

Prevention tips:

- Never leave your child alone in or near the pool.
- Fence in the pool or spa completely with a four-sided, five-foot-high fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate. The house should not be one of the fence sides. (Avoid materials like chain link that children can easily climb.)
- Teach children how to swim. Enroll children in swimming lessons taught by qualified instructors when your child is ready, usually after age 3. But keep in mind that lessons don't make your child "drown-proof."
- Teach children water safety habits. Children should not run near a pool, push others under water, jump on others, dive or jump in shallow water, or swim during lightning storms or other bad weather.
- Keep a telephone, emergency phone numbers, and rescue equipment near the pool.
- Mark the deep and shallow ends of the pool.
- Place a tamper-proof cover over the pool when it is not in use.
- Remove steps to aboveground pools when not in use.
- Empty inflatable pools when not in use.
- Keep lifesaving equipment poolside. Must-haves include a ring buoy with attached line and a long-handled hook.
- Store pool chemicals in a cool, dry, locked cabinet, out of children's reach.

Water safety for open bodies of water

A majority of drownings among older children occurs in open bodies of water. These drownings happen when an older child overestimates his or her swimming abilities or when he or she is swimming in an unsupervised area.

Prevention tips:

- Always watch your child while at the beach, lake, or other open bodies of water.
- Never let children swim in unsupervised areas like quarries, canals, or ponds.
- Children should wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices when boating or when in or near open bodies of water.

Diving safety

Diving is one of the most hazardous water activities. Most diving-related injuries occur in pools with five feet of water or less.

Prevention tips:

- Do not let your children dive into water unless an adult is present and knows that the depth of water is greater than five feet.
- Never allow your children to dive into above-ground pools.
- Teach your children to dive with their hands in front of their face and to swim toward the surface immediately upon entering the water to avoid hitting the bottom or sides of the pool.
- Teach them to dive only from the end of the diving board; never let them dive from rooftops, balconies, ledges, or fences.
- Make sure your children never dive alone, and always be sure a friend is nearby.
- Teach them to keep their dives simple.
- Make sure children test the diving board for its spring before using it.
- Do not permit them to run and dive.

Water safety in the home

It only takes as little as an inch of water for a child to drown, making water-filled buckets, bathtubs, hot tubs, sinks, and toilets possible drowning hazards. Children under age 1 most frequently drown in bathtubs and buckets.

Prevention tips:

- Never leave children unsupervised at home, especially in the bathroom, even around small amounts of water.
- Keep toilet lids down and use potty locks.
- Empty all buckets and containers and drain all water from sinks immediately after use. Store all empty containers out of reach when not in use.

For more information about water safety and the prevention of injuries to children, contact one of the following resources:

Oregon SAFE KIDS Coalition
Donna Disch-Price, coordinator
503-373-1540, ext. 275

Kaiser Permanente
Community Relations
503-813-4820

Clark County SAFE KIDS Coalition

Deborah Needham, coordinator
360-737-1911, ext. 3962

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