

Swimming Pool Safety

Drowning Fact Sheet

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths to children ages 14 and under. A temporary lapse in supervision is a common factor in most drownings and near-drownings. Child drownings can happen in a matter of seconds--in the time it takes to answer the phone. There is often no splashing to warn of trouble. Children can drown in small quantities of water and are at risk in their own homes from wading pools, bathtubs, buckets, diaper pails, and toilets as well as swimming pools, spas, and hot tubs.

Deaths and Injuries

- A swimming pool is 14 times more likely than a motor vehicle to be involved in the death of a child age 4 and under.
- Each year, approximately 1,150 children ages 14 and under drown; more than half are preschoolers (ages 0-4).
- Each year, an estimated 5,000 children ages 14 and under are hospitalized due to near-drownings.
- Of children surviving near-drownings, 5-20 percent suffer severe and permanent disability.

Where Drownings Happen

- Approximately 50 percent of preschooler drownings occur in residential swimming pools.
- Each year, more than 2,000 preschooler near-drownings occur in residential pools.
- Of preschooler pool drownings, 65 percent occur in the child's home pool and 33 percent at the homes of friends, neighbors or relatives.
- Each year, 350 drownings (for all ages) happen in bathtubs.
- Each year, approximately 40 children drown in five-gallon buckets.
- In ten states--Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington-- drowning surpasses all other causes of death to children ages 14 and under.

How and When Drownings Happen

- Of all preschoolers who drown, 70 percent are in the care of one of both parents at the time of the drowning.
- Of all preschoolers who drown, 75 percent are missing from sight for five minutes or less.

- Two-thirds of all drownings happen between May and August.
- Of all drownings, 40 percent occur on Saturdays and Sundays.

Who is at Risk

- Of all age groups, children ages 1-4 have the highest drowning death rate.
- American Indian and Alaska Native children ages 14 and under have a drowning death rate that is nearly two times higher than white children. A total of 55 percent of these drowning deaths occur in natural bodies of water.
- African-American children ages 4 and under have a drowning death rate that is lower than white children and lower than children in the overall population.
- African-American children ages 5-14 have a drowning death rate that is nearly three times higher than white children.

Costs

- Health care costs per near-drowning victim typically range from \$75,000 for initial emergency room treatment to \$180,000 a year for long-term care.
- The annual economic costs of residential pool drownings and near-drownings of young children are estimated to be \$450 million to \$650 million.

Prevention

- While there is no substitute for adult supervision, safeguards and barriers around pools and hot tubs provide additional protection for children.
- Estimates predict that the widespread use of pool fencing would prevent 50-90 percent of pediatric pool drownings and near-drownings.

Drowning Prevention Tips

Prevent Childhood Drowning

Parents whose children have drowned say the day of the tragedy started out just like any other day. No matter how the drowning happened or where it happened -- pool, spa, or any other body of water -- one thing was the same, the seconds that claimed their child's life slid by silently, without warning, and can never be brought back.

It is a fact that drowning is the leading cause of injury death of children under five years of age in 18 states.

Facts About Drowning

- Children drown during routine household activities, with adults present and providing normal levels of supervision.
- Most children who drowned or nearly drowned were last seen in the house or away from the pool or spa.

Action Step: Protection

Use layers of barrier protection between the child and water to warn and impede.

Pool and spa owners can take practical steps to make their pool and spa less dangerous by installing "layer of protection." These include:

- Alarms on doors and windows leading to the water, installed about five feet above ground level so that a child cannot reach them.
- A non-climbable, five-foot fence that separates the pool/spa from the residence should be installed. Openings should be no more than four inches wide so children cannot squeeze through the spaces.
- Self-closing and self-latching gates and doors leading to the pool/spa with latches above a child's reach. Gates should open outward.
- Pool safety covers (power operated are the safest and easiest to use).

Action Step: Supervision

Water with its rippling, shimmering appeal is a magnet for children. Children under the age of five have no fear of water and no concept of death. They associate water with play not with danger. Adults must establish and communicate responsibility for child safety.

- Assign an adult "water watcher" to supervise the pool/spa area or any other body of water, especially during social gatherings.
- Assign a second adult to maintain constant visual contact with children in the pool/spa area or any body of water that might attract a child. Don't assume someone else is watching a child.
- Never leave a child alone near a pool/spa, bathtub, toilet, water filled bucket, pond or any standing body of water in which a child's nose and mouth may be submersed.
- Don't rely on swimming lessons, life preservers, or any other equipment to make a child "water safe".
- Don't allow children to play in the pool/spa area.
- Look in the pool area **first** if a child is missing.
- Communicate pool safety measures with the baby-sitter and train the sitter in CPR.

Action Step: Preparation

- Insist anyone over 14 years of age have current CPR in infant/child safety.
- Communicate pool safety measures with the baby-sitter and train the sitter on infant/child CPR.
- Learn how to swim and learn rescue techniques.
- Mount rescue equipment by the pool such as a lifesaving ring, shepherd's hook, and a CPR sign.
- Post 9-1-1 emergency phone number on all phones. Have phone near pool area.

Pool Safety Tips

Drowning accidents are the leading cause of injury/deaths among children under five. More than 80 percent of the drownings occur in residential backyard pools or spas. It can happen quickly, always without warning, without a splash, and without a cry for

help. To help avoid such a tragedy, please read the following pool safety tips.

Secure Pool Area

A fence or barrier completely surrounding the pool can prevent many drowning accidents. Most children who drown or nearly drown were last seen in the yard, porch, or patio prior to the accident. Although a fence separating the pool and spa is the single most effective barrier for preventing childhood drownings, not one method alone is totally effective in preventing drowning accidents. Pool owners can take practical steps to make their pools and spas less dangerous by installing "layers of protection".

I. Pools should be fenced from the rest of the house. Fences should be five feet high.

II. The area adjacent to the outside of the fence must be free of objects which may aid children in climbing over the fence. These include items such as chairs, tables, tree branches, etc.

III. Gates should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward away from pool.

IV. A gate latch should be placed at the top of the gate and be inaccessible from the outside by small children.

V. All doors and windows leading to the pool should always be secured and locked at all times.

VI. Additional "layers of protection" include safety covers, alarms on doors and motion-detection devices.

VII. Remember pool covers, gates and other layers of protection do not replace adult supervision.

VIII. Assign an adult **Water Watcher** to supervise the pool/spa area, especially during social gatherings.

Effective Supervisions

I. Never allow young children to be left alone in and around the pool for a moment. Make sure an adult is always present.

II. Babysitters and guardians should always be instructed about potential hazards in and around the pool.

III. Never rely on flotation devices or swimming lessons to protect a child. Twenty-five percent of all drowning victims have had swimming lessons.

IV. Mount flotation devices designed for lifesaving near the pool. Many float-type toys are thought to be lifesavers. They are not! They

are only toys and should be used only as toys.

V. Look in the pool area first if a child is missing.

VI. Never keep toys around or in a pool.

VII. All adults, children and Baby-sitters should learn and practice CPR.

VIII. Keep a telephone outside the pool area. Post the 9-1-1 emergency number on the telephone.

What To Do If You Find a Child in a Pool

- **Yell for Help** and get the child out of the pool and onto the pool deck.
- **If someone is with you, have them call 9-1-1.** Determine if the child is breathing: tilt the head back; if you don't hear or feel breathing or see the chest rising, begin CPR immediately. Continue CPR until emergency help arrives.
- **If you are alone** and the child is not breathing, start CPR immediately. After one minute, call 9-1-1. Return to the child and continue CPR until help arrives.