

Health Tips for Parents

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How can I keep my child safe in the water?

Warm summer weather means more time for water play. For children and young adults between the ages of 5 and 24, drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death, so it's important to make sure your family is water safe.



Most water-related accidents can be avoided by



knowing how to keep safe, in and out of the water. Children need constant supervision, particularly young children, who can

drown in less than 2 inches of water. "When infants or children are in the water, an adult should remain with them within arms' length," advises Carlos Lerner MD, medical director, Children's Health Center, Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA.

Learn how to swim. Many organizations provide swim instruction to people of all ages.

Always swim with a partner, every time — whether you're swimming in a backyard pool or in a lake. Even experienced swimmers can become tired or get muscle cramps, which might make it difficult to get out of the water.

Know your limits. If you're not a good swimmer or you're just learning to swim, don't go in water that's so deep you can't touch the bottom. And don't try to keep up with skilled swimmers.

Swim in safe areas only. It's a good idea to swim only in places that are supervised by a lifeguard. At the beach, no one can anticipate changing ocean currents, rip currents, sudden storms, or other hidden dangers. Pool fences provide extra safety in homes.

Be careful about diving. Diving injuries can cause permanent spinal cord damage, paralysis and sometimes even death. Protect yourself by only diving in areas that are known to be safe, such as the deep end of a supervised pool. Teach your children to pay attention to signs that say "No Diving" or "No Swimming."

Other safety factors

- Learn life-saving skills such as CPR and rescue techniques.
- Reapply sunscreen frequently and wear UV protective attire.
- Drink plenty of fluids — especially water — to prevent dehydration.
- If feel your body start to shiver or your muscles cramp up, get out of the water quickly to prevent hypothermia.



Making Kids Water Wise

It's important to teach your kids about how to stay safe in the water. Keeping an eye on them at all times and take the necessary precautions to keep their environment safe. Floating toys and "floaties" can give a false sense of security. There isn't a substitute for life vests and close supervision, advises Dr. Lerner.

This information is provided courtesy of the pediatricians at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA. UCLA Health pediatricians are conveniently located in your neighborhood. In addition to our Children's Health Center in Westwood, we have offices in Brentwood, Manhattan Beach, Santa Monica and West Los Angeles. All health and health-related information contained in this publication is intended to be general in nature and should not be used as a substitute for a visit with a healthcare professional.