



Injury Free coalition  
for Kids®

## Water Safety Checklist

### Every Child Should Be Injury Free!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that nearly 10 people die from unintentional drowning each day, and of these, two are children 14 years or younger. Even more children receive emergency department care for nonfatal drowning injuries. Drownings are preventable.

### Water safety tips for everyone

- Wear a life jacket.** Wearing a life jacket is a simple and effective way to stay safe while near water and in water. Wear a properly fitted life jacket while in the water or on a boat, raft, inner tube or stand up paddle board. For children, sizes are based on weight. Check the life jacket for a U.S. Coast Guard approved label.
- Role model safe behaviors.** Children are more likely to wear a life jacket when adults do, too.
- Develop water survival skills.** This includes learning to swim and being prepared to help someone in need by learning life-saving skills like CPR and basic rescue skills.
- Think before diving.** Check the depth of the water before diving, and don't dive in waters 9-feet deep or less.
- Be cautious.** Even good swimmers can drown. Wear a life jacket and swim in areas supervised by lifeguards or other undistracted water watchers who can perform water rescue if needed. Never swim alone and know your own limits.
- Check weather and water conditions before swimming.** Always enter shallow and unfamiliar water feet first. It's dangerous to swim during thunderstorms or lightning storms. Cold waters, especially rivers, are unsafe even when it's hot outside. Look out for and obey all safety signs and warning signs in a swimming area.

### Water supervision for children and teens

- Drowning can be fast and silent.** Never leave someone unsupervised while swimming or around any body of water, including a swimming pool, by assigning a water watcher.
  - ✓ Avoid distractions, like reading, talking with a friend, phone calls or texts.
  - ✓ Keep young children within arm's reach.
  - ✓ Never leave a young child unattended, or under the care of another child.
  - ✓ Switch water watchers when possible to reduce fatigue.
- Adjust supervision as water risks change based on water type and the skills and development of your child.** Water depth, clarity and currents are different even in the same body of water. Check with your child's health care provider for guidance if your child experiences epilepsy, autism, ADHD or another health condition that may require extra protections.
- Avoid rough play.** Rough play between children and teens in the water may be mistaken for drowning.

## Home safety

- Bathroom:** Keep bathroom doors closed and install childproof devices (like doorknob covers) to keep young children out of the bathroom unattended.
  - ✓ Keep toilet lids closed and use childproof toilet locks when possible.
  - ✓ Never leave a young child alone in the bathtub, not even for a minute. Even supportive bathtub "rings" can't keep children from drowning. Never ask a sibling to supervise a child in the bathtub.
- Outside and around the house:** Empty buckets or other containers with liquids that aren't being used immediately. Toddlers can fall headfirst into buckets and drown – even in small amounts of water.
  - ✓ If you have a pool or pond, install a fence that's 4-feet high or taller all the way around it with latches out of reach of children. Use self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward.
  - ✓ If you have a pool or pond, automatic door locks and alarms can prevent children from exiting the house and entering the pool/pond area; and will alert you if they do exit the house.

## Pool safety

- Install childproof fencing all the way around swimming pools.** Fences should be 4-feet high or taller around it with latches out of reach of children. Use self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward.
- Use a pool cover when not in use.** The cover should support the weight of a child to prevent water access.
- Prepare the area.** Have rescue equipment (like a life ring), a first aid kit, a phone and emergency numbers near the pool.
- Keep electrical appliances away from the pool.** This can prevent electric shocks.
- Remove toys from the pool.** Clean up and store immediately after use so that children aren't tempted to reach for toys.
- Be careful with pool slides and diving boards.** Both can be increase injury risk.
- Empty blow-up pools.** Drain water from portable and inflatable pools directly after use. Flip them over so they don't collect rain water.

## Swimming and boating safety in natural waters

- Set rules and expectations for children and teens.** Discuss rules and expectations about going in or near water, and apply them. Lakes, rivers, oceans, ponds and other natural water are especially dangerous for teens who might not fully realize water dangers or overestimate what they can do. If there is a lifeguarded pool or beach in your area, have your child or teen swim there.
- Stay aware of water and boating dangers.** This includes cold water temperature, currents and sea life that could catch a swimmer off-guard. Before swimmers enter natural water, teach them what to do if they float too far from shore or get stuck in a current.
- Make sure that teens understand the dangers of substance use while swimming, boating or floating.** Substance use, including alcohol and drugs, decreases judgement, swimming ability and slows physical reaction time.

For more information visit [www.injuryfree.org](http://www.injuryfree.org)