

# Pool Safety

## Steps you can take to protect children and others from drowning in a swimming pool

What's more refreshing on a hot summer day than splashing in the pool? A swimming pool presents many families with an affordable recreation opportunity. However, along with the good times comes responsibility; so take time to plan for pool safety.

### Facts You Should Know

- Most drowning victims are 1-3 years old.
- More than half are boys.
- Most victims are being supervised by one or both parents when they drown.
- Prior to a drowning accident, most children are not expected to be around or in the pool.
- Underwater incidents involving children usually happen in familiar surroundings.

### Safety First

The basics of pool safety are supervision, a set of pool rules and common sense. Learn to swim, take your children for swimming lessons and learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Keep rescue equipment such as ropes, ring buoys or shepherd hooks on a long pole, close to the pool just in case, but make sure it's out of the way of people walking around the pool's edge. Long hair can get caught up in the pool's drain, so never allow a child to play near the drain cover. Keep a phone nearby for added safety, but don't use it for casual conversation while you're watching children.

It's important children know the pool is off limits without an adult. Setting up a removable safety fence around all four sides of the pool is a must. Fences should be at least 4 feet tall, with gates that self-close and self-latch at a point higher than your children can reach.

Doors leading from the house to the pool should be alarmed. A waterproof pool alarm can be used as added protection. Underwater pool alarms generally perform better and can be used with pool covers. Remote alarm receivers allow the alert to be heard inside the house or other places away from the pool. A motor-powered safety cover placed over the pool adds protection, but should not be used instead of a fence.

### Ground Rules

Don't let children run near a pool. Don't use the area inside the fence as a playground either. Remove all toys, bikes and balls.

Whenever in the pool area, children should wear proper floatation

devices, even if they've taken swimming lessons. Life vests are no replacement for supervision, and don't rely on air-filled "floaties" to protect them from drowning. Don't leave children unsupervised. When you have a party, designate a child-watcher. If a child is missing, check the pool first.

Rules for older children include no pushing or dunking. Adults should never swim while under the influence of alcohol or medications. No one should swim when thunder or lightning is present.

Don't dive into the shallow end.

### Just in Case

If you find an unconscious child in or near water, have someone call 911 while you begin CPR. If you are alone, perform CPR for 2 minutes before calling 911.

CPR is performed in cycles. One easy way to remember what to do is to think of the ABCs of CPR, where A stands for airway, B for breathing and C for circulation. If possible, start giving breaths immediately, even as you try to move the child to dry land, and whether or not

the child is breathing. Lay the child face-up on a firm surface. Tilt the head back slightly and lift the chin to open the airway.

Check for breathing for 3-5 seconds. Look at the chest to see if it moves. Listen for breath sounds and feel for breath on your cheek. If the child is not breathing, seal his mouth with your mouth and pinch his nose. Give two slow breaths (1-1.5 seconds each). Lift your mouth off the child's mouth between breaths. Watch for the chest to rise with the breaths. If the chest rises, next check for signs of circulation. If not, try to open the airway again. Tilt the head back a bit more and lift the chin. Try two more breaths.

If the chest still does not rise, the airway may be blocked. Follow the steps of CPR, but each time you open the airway, look for an object in the mouth. If nothing is seen, **do not** put your fingers in the mouth. If you see something that looks like it might be blocking the child's airway, try to remove it, but only if it is in the front of the mouth.

Remember, the lung capacity of a child is far less than an adult. Use less pressure in chest compression and only press down 1 inch with the heel of one hand.

Also, use less force when blowing air into the child. You'll know you are blowing hard enough when you see the child's chest rise. ■



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The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your healthcare provider. This handout may be reproduced for distribution to patients.

Sources: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota

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