Water Safety for Children and Teenagers

Drowning is one of the leading causes of death in children aged 1-19. Here are some tips to keep your kids safe while they are having fun this summer.

How will I keep my child safe at home?

You must watch your child at all times while they are in or around water, even in a shallow toddler's pool. Parents of infants, toddlers, or young children should **learn CPR** (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation) so they know what to do if there is a problem. To watch your child properly you must be only a few feet away, providing "touch supervision". In addition, make sure to:

- Empty and put away inflatable pools after each play session.
- Be aware of small bodies of water your child might encounter, such as bathtubs, fishponds, ditches, fountains, rain barrels, watering cans or even the bucket you use when you wash the car.
- Empty containers of water when you're done using them. Children are drawn to places like these and need constant supervision to be sure they don't fall in.
- Remove toys when the pool is not being used to prevent a child going in on their own to retrieve them.

How will I keep my child safe away from home?

- If children are in out-of-home child care, ask about exposure to water and how many adults are watching the children.
- Advise teenagers about the increased risk of drowning when alcohol is involved.

- Parents should know the depth of the water and any underwater hazards before allowing children to jump in. The first time you enter the water, **jump feet first – do not dive.**

Children need to learn to swim. Swimming lessons are recommended for most children 4 years and older. Classes may reduce the risk of drowning even in children under the age of 4. Decide whether or not your child is ready to enroll in swim lessons based on how often they are exposed to water, and their emotional and physical abilities.

How will I keep my child safe in open water?
- Make sure your child is **wearing a life jacket** when riding in a boat. Small children and non-swimmers must wear a life jacket also at water's edge, such as on a river bank or pier.
    - Do not use air-filled swimming aids (such as inflatable arm bands) in place of life jackets. They can deflate and are not designed to keep swimmers safe.
- When choosing an open body of water for children to swim in, select a site with lifeguards.
- Teach your child what to do in case of rip currents: swim parallel to the shore until out of the current, then swim back to the shore.

How will I keep my child safe at the pool?
- If you have a pool, install a **four-sided fence that is at least 4 feet high** to limit access to the pool. The fence should be hard to climb (not chain-link) and have a self-latching, self-closing gate. Consider pool alarms and rigid pool covers as additional layers of protection, but neither can take the place of a fence.
- Do not allow children to use spas and hot tubs, they can easily drown or become overheated.

- Keep electrical appliances away from the pool.
- Don't swim during lightning storms.
- Do not allow wheeled toys by the pool, such as tricycles.
- Keep a safety ring with a rope beside the pool at all times.
- If possible, have a phone in the pool area with emergency numbers clearly marked.

What should I do in a drowning emergency?

- Get your child out of the water immediately, then check to see if they are breathing on their own. If they are not, begin CPR immediately.
    - If someone else is present, send them to call for emergency medical help, but don't spend precious moments looking for someone, and don't waste time trying to drain water from your child's lungs.
- Concentrate on giving them rescue breathing and CPR until they are breathing on their own. Vomiting swallowed water is very likely during CPR.
- Stop and Call 911 only when the child's breathing has resumed. Once the paramedics arrive, they will administer oxygen and continue CPR if necessary.

Resources:

Swimming lessons in your area:

- SPLASH: YMCA:
    - Free 30-minute swim lessons in the Ypsilanti area. Go to http://www.annarborYMCA.org and search **SPLASH**
- Detroit Swims:
    - Free Belle Isle swim lessons for Detroit residents. Contact the YMCA at (313) 309 – 9622.
- Any YMCA:
    - Go to http://www.ymca.net/ and enter your zip code in the box that says "Find Your Y".

- Goldfish Swim School:
  - Go to https://goldfishswimschool.com/locations/ and search by zip code or city.

CPR classes in your area:

- Contact your local YMCA.
  - Go to http://www.ymca.net/ and enter your zip code in the box that says "Find Your Y".
- The American Red Cross has locations in Ann Arbor, Canton, Livonia, and Detroit.
  - Go to http://www.redcross.org/ux/take-a-class and select "**CPR**" and type in your city.

Where can I find more information?

- Book*: Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5 to 12*. American Academy of Pediatrics.
- American Academy of Pediatrics, "A Parent's Guide to Water Safety." https://patiented.solutions.aap.org/handout.aspx?gbosid=156585
- Safe Kids Worldwide, "Water Safety": https://www.safekids.org/water-safety