



## Accidents don't take vacations

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Summer is the wrong time to take a vacation from safety. When it comes to drowning, the statistics don't lie. The vast majority of drownings occur between May and August. While children under 12 are most likely to drown in a swimming pool, those over ten, including adults, are at much higher risk in open water like a river or lake.

Finally, death rates from drowning are higher in rural areas, mostly because access to emergency medical care is miles away.

Whether you're boating, fishing or swimming, don't take risks this summer. There are simple steps to prevent drowning – the second leading cause of childhood death in the nation.

**Ages 0-5** This age group is at severely high risk for drowning as infants and young children can drown in as little as one inch of water. Most small children drown in or around their home with one or both parents present. Remember, drowning is quick and silent. Therefore, parents must be watchful.

- Give 100 percent of attention to children near water – even the tub. Take them with you if you go answer the phone or put in laundry. Better yet, keep a cordless phone with you so you aren't tempted to leave for "just a second" and can call for help if needed.
- Empty all buckets and small pools after use or keep them covered. Many children have drown in garden buckets and diaper pails.
- Fence in your back yard pool and have locking gates.
- Keep toddlers out of the bathroom unless supervised. Drowning in the toilet is very common.
- All toddlers should have on a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) when near water. However, a PFD does not replace adult supervision – not even for a few seconds.

**Ages 6-11** Your school-age child might be a good swimmer, but, again, there is no substitute for supervision. Kids this age often overestimate their abilities and make poor judgment calls where water is concerned, so parents stay alert and follow these rules...

- Don't expect a lifeguard or a babysitter to supervise your child at the pool or beach.
- Make sure your child is wearing a PFD, especially on a boat, in open water or fishing on a dock.
- Enroll them in swimming lessons and teach them to obey pool rules.
- Don't let kids see how long they can hold their breath under water. Many kids can get disoriented or black out playing this game.

**Ages 12 and up** — This is where it gets really tough. Although they no longer need your constant supervision, kids in this age group need strict rules and common sense. As teens, peer pressure can be harsh and kids, especially boys, become risk takers. Parents must be firm with water safety rules and back them up with logical explanations and consequences if they are broken. Here are some rules for them, and you, to follow...

- Swim only in supervised areas and never swim alone.
- Never dive in unfamiliar water. Head and neck injury are common during summer swim months.
- Never mix alcohol or drug use with water activities.
- Always wear a PDF if on a boat or personal water craft.
- Know the water, especially in a reservoir, river or on the ocean where hidden currents can sweep even the best swimmer away.
- If caught in a swift current, swim with the water at a diagonal to the closest shore. You'll end up downstream, but walking back to your destination is preferable to a funeral service.
- And finally, try to **never get into the water to save a drowning swimmer**. Chances are you'll end up a victim as well. Instead, follow this advice...

**Reach**-- out a branch, pole, rope, oar or towel to a drowning person near shore. Remember to stay low for balance. If you're at a pool, lay flat on the deck and extend an arm or leg.

**Throw** – something that floats such as a cooler lid, life jacket, water jug or empty plastic bottle. Tell the victim to put it under their chin and kick toward shore.

**Row** – a boat or canoe to the victim. Extend an oar, not your hand.

**Go** – to them as a last resort, but always take a flotation device. Have them hold onto the flotation device, not you, while you tow them back to safety.

Last but not least, learn CPR. You never know when you'll need it to save a life – maybe your own child's.