



Drowning Prevention Tips for Children Ages 0-5 Years

As little ones play and explore, water can be a delight. Join the fun and help your child see the water as a respected friend. During these years, it's easy to instill good water safety habits. The single most important thing you can do is watch your children. Drowning can happen swiftly and silently. It is the second leading cause of injury death for this age group.

At Home:

Infants and young children can drown in as little as two inches of water. Hundreds of children have drowned in bathtubs, hot tubs, garden ponds, toilets and five-gallon buckets.

- Keep toddlers out of the bathroom except when supervised by an adult.
- Never leave a baby or toddler alone in the bath or have a sibling watch a small child.
- Avoid having five-gallon buckets in your home. Empty and put them out of reach when not in use.

In the Yard:

Mishaps can happen just outside your door, so reduce your child's access to water. Children like water and can quickly wander away.

- Enclose pools on all four sides with a fence at least four feet high and entrance only through a locking gate. Add a power safety cover and/or door and pool alarms.
- Keep buckets and garbage cans covered.
- Empty the wading pool when you're not using it.
- Cover hot tubs when not in use. Keep your child's hair away from suction drain covers in spas or in hot tubs.
- Fence garden ponds.

In and Near the Water:

- Closely **watch** your children and keep them within reach at all times. At social events, take turns being "water watchers" to supervise children near the water. Children aren't capable of watching other children near the water, even for a minute.
- Life vests only work when they are worn! Insist that life vests, also known as life jackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs), be worn when your children are playing in or near the water, on a dock or in a boat, raft or inner tube.
- Buy your child a life vest. There may not always be one that fits to rent or borrow.
- Infant/toddler "water adjustment" classes promote water safety and play, but can't replace supervision. Children are ready for formal swim lessons at about age four.
- Teach your child to wait for your "OK" before getting into the water.
- Try to swim and play in areas with lifeguards. Even with a lifeguard, you still need to supervise closely.
- Pick out safe points around bodies of water. Teach your child that the edge is safe to grab, not another person.
- Enforce and model all water safety rules.
- Never use inflatable water toys as life preservers or in place of supervision.
- Learn infant and child CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

Remember: Nothing replaces constant adult supervision.

For More Information

- Talk with your health care provider
- Visit the Washington State Drowning Prevention Network Web site: www.seattlechildrens.org/dp