

PARENTS MAGAZINE ON DROWNING -- THE QUICK AND SILENT KILLER

How To Keep Your Kids Safe At the Pool, Beach or Lake

NEW YORK – Water is a big danger for little kids. Drowning is the leading cause of injury related death among children ages 1 to 3, and the second-leading cause among kids under 15. About 800 children – the number of students on 11 full school buses – drown every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Despite these alarming figures, only 34 percent of parents know that water is one of the top killers of kids, according to a survey by Safe Kids Worldwide, a child safety advocacy group.

“Drowning is quick and silent,” says *Parents* advisor Martin Eichelberger, M.D., president and CEO of Safe Kids and director of emergency trauma and burn services at Children’s National Medical Center in Washington D.C. “Everyone thinks, ‘it won’t happen to me because I keep an eye on my children,’” says Maureen Williams, president of the National Drowning Prevention Alliance in Huntington Beach, California.

But small children move fast and can fall into the water in the seconds it takes you to answer your cell phone or grab a towel.

“Drowning Dangers,” a comprehensive feature on water safety, published in the July issue of *Parents*, focuses on multiple layers of protection: the importance of parental vigilance; precautions to take if you’re a backyard pool owner to protect your kids and any other children who visit your home; and safety steps to protect children from drain dangers in hot tubs and pools.

Below, some of the safety measures prescribed by the magazine that every parent should follow, whether you’re at a swimming pool, ocean, lake or river:

- Always stay within arm’s reach: If you need to leave a pool area, for example, take your child with you.
- Select swimming areas carefully: Make sure that beaches or lakes are well maintained and supervised by a lifeguard. Stay in the designated swimming area, and don’t go in the water if there are strong waves or currents that could pull your child.
- Don’t rely on the lifeguard: They don’t always notice when kids slip under the water, says Dr. Eichelberger. It’s up to you to keep your child safe.
- Use proper safety devices: Arm floaties and air filled tubes aren’t approved for safety and won’t protect your child against drowning.
- Be wary of plastic or inflatable pools. For example, experts caution against using large kiddie pools because they’re too heavy to empty after each use and are usually not protected by fences and covers. Even in the case of smaller, very shallow kiddie pools, it’s just as important to watch your child. While most parents think a 3 or 4 year old can just stand up and get out of a baby pool, if he falls and gets a mouthful of water, he can get scared and not know what to do. A child that age can drown in a few minutes.

For more information, or to arrange for an interview with an editor from *Parents*, contact: Susan Soriano, 212.499.1627 or Susan.Soriano@meredith.com.

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