



Safety Tips for Swimmers

Drowning is a common cause of death in young people. Swimming injuries, drowning and deaths can be prevented by following simple safety rules. These rules apply whether you are at the beach or in a private pool. By following these rules, you can make sure that swimming is safe and fun.

How can I stay safe when swimming?

Read the signs

When you are at a pool with signs, read them and follow them. Pool rules are there to protect you. The rules prevent accidents, and keep pools clean and germ-free.

Walk, do not run

Do not run around the edges of the pool. The area around the pool can be slippery, especially when kids have been splashing around.

Be careful getting in and out of the pool

Be careful when you get in and out of the pool. If there is a handrail, use it.

Look before you leap or dive in

Shallow water, underwater logs or big rocks are all dangerous when you are diving into lakes or swimming holes. Diving head first into a pool or lake can cause serious injury.

Always check the area and then enter slowly and feet first. Check the area each time before you enter the pool or lake, as swimming conditions or surroundings may change. You may not be able to see underwater swimmers, toys and other objects.

Do not go beyond your abilities

When you go in the water, swim only where you feel comfortable. Do not go farther or deeper than you can handle. At beaches, swim parallel to the shore, and stay inside roped-off areas.

Never swim alone

Never swim alone. Use the “buddy system”. Make sure you watch out for each other. Even when a lifeguard is around, it is best to have a “buddy”.

Play carefully

Wrestling and tumbling in a pool or lake can be very dangerous. Hitting your head against pool walls or floors, or rocks in lakes, can knock you unconscious. If you do not get help, you can drown very quickly.

Do not drink alcohol

Injuries involving alcohol are a common problem at private pools, beaches and local swimming holes. Alcohol can make accidents worse because it slows your reflexes and makes you clumsy. Alcohol can also put you to sleep. This is especially dangerous in a hot tub. If you are in or around the water or a hot tub, do not drink alcohol.

Watch out for hazards

Never play around suction lines or pool drains. Water is always pumping through a filter system in swimming pools and hot tubs. This means the water is suctioned out of the pool, into pipes.

You should never put your head underwater in a whirlpool or hot tub because the suction lines can catch your hair and hold your head under water until you drown. Your fingers, toes, arms, legs, or torso (body trunk) can get caught in suction lines too. If you have long hair, you should wear a bathing cap or securely tie back the ends of your hair in a short braid or bun.

Make sure drain covers are specifically designed to prevent suction hazards. If a pool drain cover is missing, do not use the pool until the cover is replaced.

Watch out for underwater traps

Some railings or ladders in pools or hot tubs have small spaces, which can trap children underwater.

Sometimes, children drown because they are stuck in a railing or between a ladder and the pool wall.

How can I protect my child?

Never leave your child alone

A child can drown in just a few minutes and in a few centimetres of water. Young children need constant supervision by an adult when they are in or near the water. Infants and toddlers should always be within arm's reach of an adult when they are in or near water. Older children should always have someone nearby, and they should use the "buddy system".

Beaches have so many hidden dangers, such as underwater logs, sudden drop offs, or tidal currents. Stay with your children. Obey any posted warnings about currents or dangerous areas, and ask other people if they know of any trouble spots in the area.

Never let children play in hot tubs

A quick soak is okay, but the hot water can quickly affect a child's small body. To learn more about the health concerns related to hot tub use, see [HealthLinkBC File #27a Residential Hot Tubs and Pools: Health and Safety Tips](#).

Use sunscreen

Protect your children from UV rays (ultraviolet radiation). Use "waterproof" sunscreen for the pool or beach. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #26 Sun Safety for Children](#).

Take a first aid course

Take a first aid course that teaches:

- artificial respiration, sometimes called the "Breath of Life";
- child Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR); and
- self-rescue and skills for rescuing others.

Many agencies offer these courses for parents. For more information, visit St. John Ambulance at www.sja.ca/English/courses-and-training/Pages/default.aspx

Wear life jackets

Children should always wear a life jacket when they are swimming or in a boat. Check the label to make sure that your child's life jacket is government approved and that it is the right size for your child's weight.

How can I make my pool safe?

Fence off your pool

Make sure there is a fence at least 1.5m (5ft) high around your pool with a gate that cannot be opened by a child. Make sure the gate is closed and locked when no one is around to protect your child and other children in the neighbourhood. Check if there are local government by-laws for swimming pool safety.

Keep your pool clean

Dirty pools grow bacteria and other germs that can make you sick. A few good habits help keep the pool a clean and healthy environment.

- Always wash before you get into a pool.
- Do not enter a pool if you are sick, especially if you have diarrhea.
- Never bring food or drinks in the pool. Spills make pools dirty. If there is broken glass from cups or dishes, you will need to drain the pool to clean it.
- Do not track dirt from outside into the pool.
- Make sure you wear a proper bathing suit. Do not swim in street clothes.
- Use swimming diapers instead of disposable diapers.
- Follow the operation and maintenance instructions for your pool circulation system. You can get this information from your pool supplier.

Make sure it is easy to get in and out

Make sure it is easy and safe to get in and out of your pool or hot tub.

Make sure there are no hidden dangers

Broken fittings and sharp edges can cause cuts, bruises and other injuries. If you see any broken play equipment, fittings or pipes, get them fixed.