Child Safety: Preventing Drowning

An infant or young child can drown in as little as 1 in. (2.5 cm) of water or other liquid.

Deal with water hazards

The following recommendations can help you protect your child from drowning hazards:

- Don't leave babies and young children alone in the bathtub or a swimming or wading pool. If a baby slips or rolls and lands facedown, he or she may not be able to turn over. Bathing seats or flotation devices may be used, but they don't protect against drowning and aren't a substitute for your attention.
- Don't leave babies and young children alone around filled buckets, such as 5-gallon buckets used for cleaning. Empty buckets after each use, and keep them out of children's reach. Buckets have tall, straight sides, which make it very hard for infants and young children to escape if they have fallen in.
- Leave toilet lids down. Keep young children out of the bathroom without your direct supervision. Make sure your toddler knows that the toilet isn't a toy. Toilets are drowning hazards, especially for children younger than 3. An older baby or young child can fall headfirst into the water and not be able to climb back out. Consider placing a latch on the bathroom door, out of reach of young children.
- Empty all liquid containers immediately after use. Keep all empty containers out of reach of young children and babies. Don't leave empty containers in the yard or around the house. They can accumulate water and become a drowning hazard.
- Empty coolers immediately after use, and keep lids closed. Store out of children's reach.
- Watch children closely outdoors, especially where wells, open postholes, and irrigation or drainage ditches are nearby. Fill holes and install fences or other barriers to protect your child. Make sure pools are fenced off and have covers that lock. Don't let a child out of your sight while you are doing yard work or other outdoor activities.
- Never let your child swim in any fast-moving water.
Teach swimming safety

Children need to learn to swim. You can help prevent drowning incidents by teaching your children basic safety rules and swimming skills.

The following are suggestions to help you prepare your child for water-related activities:

- Teach your children four key swimming rules:
  1. Always swim with a buddy.
  2. Don't dive into unknown bodies of water. Jump feet first.
  3. Don't push or jump on others while in the water.
  4. Be prepared for an emergency. Instruct children on getting help from an adult or calling 911.

- Don't let your child use inflatable swimming aids (such as "water wings") without constant supervision. They can deflate, or a child can slip out of them. Also, children can develop habits using these devices that can put them at risk for drowning. For example, a child who frequently uses water wings may learn to jump into a pool on impulse. He or she may do so while not wearing the devices, before having a chance to think about it.

- As a parent, learn to swim if you don't already know how. Also, learn swimming survival and rescue techniques.

- If you enroll your child in swim lessons, remember that swim lessons won't necessarily prevent drowning. Swim lessons may give you and your child a false sense of security and make you both less cautious around water. Be sure that your child swims only when a watchful adult is present.

- When visiting public or private pools, make sure that your children are supervised.

Credits for Child Safety: Preventing Drowning

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