

# Water Safety Tips to Help Keep Your Family Safe

Most kids like to play in water. But you know water can be dangerous. In fact, drowning is the most common cause of accidental death for kids ages 1 to 4.<sup>1</sup> And, for every drowning, there are 2 more kids who need emergency care, and another 2 who are hospitalized for nonfatal drowning injuries (injuries resulting from being under water too long).<sup>2</sup> It only takes a small amount of water for young children to drown.

The nonprofit Home Safety Council® (HSC), which has merged with Safe Kids Worldwide, created this booklet as part of **Start Safe: A Water Safety Program for Young Children and Their Families**. Use the tips in this booklet to help keep your children safe in and around water. Remember to **Lock, Look, and Learn** when it comes to your children and water! Talk to your children about water safety so they know the rules.



## Lock

**Stop your child from getting to water.**

1. Empty buckets and drain bathtubs after you use them.
2. Keep toilet seats closed and use toilet seat locks.
3. Put a fence that is at least 4 feet high around all 4 sides of pools and spas.
4. Have a gate that closes by itself and locks.
5. Keep the gate locked when no adult is there.
6. Keep spas and hot tubs covered and locked when not in use.
7. If a door in your home opens onto your pool, put an alarm on the door and keep it locked.
8. If you have a pet door to the backyard, children can use it to get out. You need a 4-sided fence to separate the pool from the yard.
9. Empty blow-up or kiddie pools when they are not being used. Store them safely.
10. If you have a large blow-up pool that cannot be emptied easily, put a fence around it with a gate that locks. Take the fence down after you empty the pool.
11. Put away all pool toys when you leave the pool.
12. Cover pool and spa drains with safety guards or drain covers so the suction can't trap a child or adult.
13. Have a pool expert check your pool or spa drains to make sure they are safe.
14. Do not use a pool or spa if the drain covers are missing or broken.
15. Find out if your community pools use safe drain covers that are required by law.

Please visit  
[www.homesafetycouncil.org/  
startsafeprogram](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/startsafeprogram)  
for water safety games for you  
and your children.



## Look

### Keep your eyes on your children at all times.

1. Stay within arm's reach of children when they are in or near water.
2. Watch children in and around bathtubs, toilets, and buckets.
3. Watch children in and around spa tubs and pools, including kiddie pools and blow-up pools.
4. Watch children in and around all open bodies of water—streams, ponds, rivers, canals, lakes, oceans.
5. Never take your eyes off your children—not even for a minute.
6. Watch your children even if they've had swimming lessons.
7. Watch your children even if there's a lifeguard on duty.
8. With the adults, take turns being the "water watcher" if you are at a pool or beach with a group of adults and children. Water watchers must know how to swim and know what to do in an emergency.

## Learn

### Learn swimming and safety skills.

1. Know how to swim. Take lessons if you need to learn.
2. Sign up your children for swimming lessons. Or have a grownup who can swim teach them.
3. Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) so you can help save someone if there is an emergency.
4. Have your children wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets in and around pools and open water. Make sure life jackets are the right size.
5. Do not use floaties, arm bands, or other kinds of floats—they are not safe.

Children ages 1 to 4 may be less likely to drown if they have swimming lessons from a trained professional.<sup>3</sup> The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children learn to swim. Talk to your child's doctor if you want to know if your child is ready for swimming lessons.

6. Have safety equipment like a rescue tube, ring buoy, float, or rescue pole at your pool.
7. Bring a cell phone with you to pools and other swimming areas. Or make sure there is a phone there. Only use it to call 911 in an emergency. Do not use it to text or talk when watching your children.



## Teach your children:

- Only go swimming with a grownup who is watching you.
- Only go in the bathtub when a grownup is there.
- Do not play with water in buckets or toilets.
- Stay away from pool and spa drains, grates, and filters.
- Always ask a grownup to watch you before playing in any kind of water.

## Where to Find Swimming Lessons

Contact these groups to see if they offer swimming lessons in your area. Go online or contact your local organization.

- **American Red Cross** [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)
- **USA Swimming Foundation**  
<http://swimfoundation.org/Page.aspx?pid=347>
- **YMCA** [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net)

1. CDC: *Protect the Ones You Love: Drownings*, 7/27/09. ([www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/Drowning](http://www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/Drowning))
2. CDC: Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). ([www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars))
3. American Academy of Pediatrics: *AAP Gives Updated Advice on Drowning Prevention*, 5/24/10. ([www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/may2410studies.htm](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/may2410studies.htm))



A public education campaign from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.