



POOL SAFETY AWARENESS

You must be aware of the potentially hazardous properties of a pool. An accessible pool is more dangerous for your toddler than a loaded gun lying out on your coffee table. In a child's hands eventually it will go off! But unlike the gun going off and where the bullet will strike, the outcome with a toddler falling into a pool undetected is almost certain.

Just how serious is the problem? Drowning is the number one cause of death for children under five in Florida, Arizona, and California with a ranking of number two for over a dozen other states. For every drowning there are eleven near drowning incidents, according to government statistics; many of which result in totally disabling brain damage.

The majority of the parents involved were responsible people who thought it could never happen to their family. They were careful and had close supervision over their children. Many were in good income brackets, educated, and could afford nice homes with pools in family oriented communities. So we are literally talking about people who could live next door to you.

If drowning were a disease it truly would be referred to as an epidemic with all the public attention and awareness possible focused on an epidemic of such proportion.

It is a misperception that there are two basic outcomes to a drowning emergency, the child lives or dies. Nearly 25 percent of the children that are near drowning victims survive with severe disabilities.

Only you can help prevent this unfortunate accident by following these safety tips.

- Designate a responsible adult to watch young children while in the bath and all children swimming or playing in or around the water. Adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity (such as reading, playing cards, talking on the phone, or mowing the lawn) while supervising children.
- Always swim with a buddy. Select swimming sites that have lifeguards whenever possible.
- Avoid drinking alcohol before or during swimming, boating, or water skiing. Avoid drinking alcohol while supervising children.
- Learn to swim.
- Constant vigilant supervision and barriers such as pool fencing are still necessary.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Because of the time it might take for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills can make a difference in someone's life. CPR performed by bystanders has been shown to improve outcomes in drowning victims.

- With young children, do not use air-filled or foam toys, such as “water wings”, “noodles”, or inner-tubes, in place of life jackets (personal flotation devices). These toys are not designed to keep swimmers safe.

If you have a swimming pool at your home:

- Install a four-sided, isolation pool fence that totally separates the house and yard from the pool area. The fence should be at least 4 feet high and should completely separate the pool from the house and play area of the yard. Use self closing and self latching gates that open outward, and have latches that are out of a child’s reach. Consider additional barriers such as automatic door locks or alarms to prevent or notify you regarding access to the yard or pool.
- Toys should be removed from the pool immediately after use. Floats, balls and other toys might encourage children to enter the pool area or lean over the pool and potentially fall in.

If in or around natural bodies of water:

- Know the local weather conditions and forecast before swimming or boating. Strong winds and thunderstorms with lightning strikes are dangerous.
- Use US Coast Guard approved life jackets when boating, regardless of distance to be traveled, size of boat, or swimming ability of boaters.
- Heed colored beach warning flags.
- Watch for dangerous waves and signs of rip currents (e.g. water that is discolored and choppy, foamy, or filled with debris). If you are caught in a rip current, swim parallel to shore; once free of the current, swim toward shore.