

# Disability Campaign.org

## Water Safety for Children and Teens

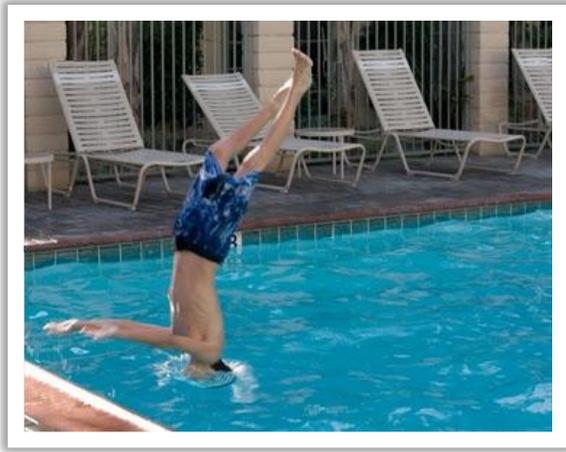


Photo: PoolAccidents.BlogSpot.com

According to the CDC, “every day, about 10 people die from unintentional drowning.” What’s more, nonfatal drowning injuries can lead to severe brain damage and long-term disabilities. In addition to drowning, spinal cord injuries caused by diving are a leading cause water related accidents. Children and teenagers are amidst those most at risk of sustaining a water related injury.

### *Ways to prevent water related injuries*

- **Supervise children and teenagers near water.** Even if there is a lifeguard, be mindful of where your children are. They need not be inside the water to experience an injury near water; for example, running around the pool could cause the child to slip and sustain an injury.
- **Talk to your children about water safety.** You may not always be there when your children are around water, such as if they are at camp or at a friends house. For these reasons, it is important that your children understand that although water can be fun, they need to take precautions. Talk to them about the importance of checking the depth of the water, not diving into pools or shallow water, only swimming when there is an adult nearby, and not being near water by themselves. By educating your children, you are giving them the opportunity to make better choices when near water.

- **Teach children how to swim.** Some children may benefit from swimming lessons by qualified instructors, but others learn better working with someone they trust, such as a parent or family friend. Even if your child knows how to swim, don't assume that he or she is not at risk for drowning. For younger children, invest in proper fitting flotation devices.
- **Check water temperature and depth.** If a child is shivering or experiencing muscle cramps, get him or her out of the water immediately. Water that is too cold may be dangerous for your child as body temperature drops more quickly in water than on land. Hot tubs may also pose a danger as children can overheat and even drown. If you are pregnant, you will want to check the water temperature to make sure it is not too hot for your baby. Look around for signs that may signal a diving risk. Especially when in a lake or near muddy waters, check the water depth. Be cautious with hot tubs and with pools that have a diving board, as children may be tempted to dive and risk a head or neck injury.
- **Fence your pool.** The fence should go directly around the pool or spa (or both) creating a barrier between the water and your house. Make sure the latch or lock is located high enough and out of children's reach. A pool cover or alarm can be used in addition to a fence, but should not serve as a replacement for a fence as they are not always reliable.
- **Carry a phone with you at all times.** Whether it is a cordless phone or a cell phone, make sure that you have a phone near you at all times while you're supervising your children by the water. Consider creating a speed dial key to 911 or your local emergency rooms so that if an emergency were to occur, you would have quick access to help. Make sure your children also know that if they were to witness a water related injury, they can also call 911.
- **Know your location.** If you are traveling away from home, note the address or location where you will be. This will be important if you need to make a phone call to 911 or to medical responders.



Photo: GuardianPoolFence.com

- **Take a CPR class.** You, caregivers, and even your children may want to consider taking a CPR class—especially since CPR for children and infants is slightly different to that performed on adults. In addition, you should have with you safety equipment, such as an emergency flotation device and a first aid kit.
- **Wear foot protection if you are in a pond, lake, or at the beach.** Jagged rocks, broken glass, or trash could cause a cut. Slippery rocks could lead to a fall. Stings from jellyfish or stingrays often occur on the feet.
- **Watch for waves if at the beach.** Don't allow your children to swim in large waves or undertows. Tell them to face the water at all times. If they are caught in a rip current or undertow, they should swim parallel to the shore or call loudly for lifeguard help.

### *What to do in an emergency*

1. Immediately get the child out of the water while calling loudly for help.
2. If someone else is available, have them call 911.
3. Check to ensure the child's air passages are clear. If they are not breathing, perform CPR or follow the instructions provided by the emergency operator.
4. If you think the child suffered a neck injury, keep the child on his or her back. Brace the neck and shoulders with your hands and forearms to keep the neck immobilized until emergency help arrives. Speak calmly to the child, watch her breathing, and do not let the child move.



Photo: BeatingHeartCenter.com

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