Swimming safety

School's out and summer's here. Time for kids to suit up and hit the beach, the pool or anywhere else there's water, to enjoy their favourite summer activity—swimming. The tips below will help you keep your kids splashing and swimming safely.



Supervise. Whether at the beach or in the backyard pool make sure that children are watched at all times, even if they're strong swimmers. It only takes a few seconds for something to go awry, so be there if it does.

Pay attention. "Keeping an eye" on your kids means just that. Don't read, watch TV or talk on the phone while you're on duty.

Steer clear of alcohol. You want to be at your most alert if you have to help your children in an emergency, so take a holiday from alcohol while monitoring swim time. Alcohol is a main factor in many drowning incidents.

- **Clear the area.** Keep the area around your pool free of toys and clutter that people can trip over.
- **Remove water toys after swim time.** Beach balls and other floating playthings can lure a young child to the water's edge and possibly fall in.
- **Prepare for emergencies.** Keep a phone by the pool for emergencies.
- **Fence it in.** Install a self-latching fence that's at least four feet high around backyard pools. It'll keep any little explorers out.
- **Get a pool alarm.** There are several on the market that'll let you know if your child opens the pool gate or has gone in the water.
- **Buddy up.** Teach your kids never to swim on their own.
- **Get certified.** Whether you're a pool owner or not, CPR is a life-saving tool worth knowing.
- **Chlorinate your pool sufficiently.** Bacteria may develop if you don't, which can cause infections or other illnesses.
- **Buy life preservers.** Make sure proper floatation devices are close at hand. Keep life jackets and roped life buoys near the pool.
- **Swim near a lifeguard.** If swimming at a beach, make sure that you and your kids stay close to lifeguards on duty.
- **Steer clear.** Keep kids clear of boats, water skiers and jet skiers when swimming in lakes, rivers, oceans, etc.
- **Avoid shallow dives.** Teach your children not to dive into unknown waters or above-ground pools. Spinal damage from diving in shallow water is one of the most common, devastating and yet easily prevented swimming injuries.
- **Suit up.** Snap a lifejacket on you and your children when boating, water skiing, jet skiing, etc. Make sure that life jackets fit snugly and are worn according to instructions.
- **Slap on sunscreen.** Playing for hours in the water can be great fun. It's also an easy way for kids to get burned when they don't feel the heat of the sun's rays. Use a waterproof sunscreen with a minimum SPF 15 and make sure that you and your kids reapply after swimming.

- **Develop an emergency action plan.** If you own a pool, it's vital that you have step-by-step instructions laid out before help gets there.

Although swimming is a fun summertime activity, many dangers may present themselves. Ensure that your children are aware of your family's safe swimming plan, and always ensure that small swimmers are properly supervised.