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Be #WaterCautious: Prevent Unsupervised Access to Water

Drowning is a leading cause of death for young children. Be aware of the potential risks and prevent unsupervised access to water. This includes in-ground and above ground pools and spas, portable pools, bath tubs, buckets and other bodies of water, such as rivers, lakes, ponds and canals.

The Risk:

- [Drowning](#) is the second leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for children 1 to 14 years of age and kills more children ages 1 to 4 than anything else except for birth defects. On average, three children die each day from drowning.
- Drowning risks vary by age.
 - Children younger than 1 year old are more likely to drown at home.
 - Children between 1 and 4 years of age are more likely to drown in a home swimming pool or spa.
 - Those 5 to 17 years old are more likely to drown in natural water, such as a pond or lake.
- Lack of barriers to prevent [unsupervised water access](#) is a main factor in many drowning incidents.
- Pool and spa drownings occur in public and private settings, in backyard in-ground and above-ground pools, kids' pools, apartment complexes and hotels.
- The US Consumer Product Safety Commission says that nearly 70% of young children who drowned in swimming pools were not expected to be in or at the pool.
- After pools, [bathtubs](#) are the second leading location where young children drown. However, buckets, bath seats, wells, cisterns, septic tanks, decorative ponds, and toilets, are also potential drowning sources for infants and toddlers.

What to do:

- Check for water hazards in your setting, such as an unfenced pool, liquid-filled buckets or an ornamental pond, then take appropriate precautions to prevent unsupervised access.
- Childproof your home against water hazards from bathtubs, bath seats, toilets and buckets:
 - Place locks on toilet seat covers in case a young child wanders into the bathroom.
 - Empty unattended buckets containing even a small amount of liquid immediately after use, including buckets outside that can collect rainwater. Toddlers are top heavy and can easily fall headfirst into buckets and drown. After using a bucket, always empty and store it inside or where young children cannot reach it.
 - Drain all water from portable and inflatable kiddie pools, and flip them over so they cannot collect rainwater.
- If you have a pool, spa or ornamental pond at home:
 - Install a fence that is at least 4-feet high, and completely separates the water from the house and yard. Use self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward, with latches that are out of reach of children. See [CPSC Safety Barrier Guidelines for Residential Pools](#) for details.
 - In addition to a fence, install additional layers of protection, such as automatic door locks and alarms to prevent access and to alert you if someone exits the home and enters the pool area.
 - Install and use a door or pool alarm, and/or a pool or spa cover if the house serves as part of a pool or spa fence.



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- Make sure that pool or spa covers can support the weight of a child and not allow access to the water.
- Remove floats, balls and other toys from the pool and surrounding area immediately after use so children are not tempted to enter the pool area unsupervised.
- For above-ground pools, the pool structure itself is a barrier, however be sure to prevent young children from climbing up into the pool by securing, locking or removing steps and ladders.
- Be aware of pet doors that lead directly to a pool or other backyard body of water. A fence between the house and the pool is a must if there is a cat or dog door.
- If you have natural water on your property or near your home, such as a pond, river, lake, stream or canal, or if you have a neighbor with an unfenced pool or spa:
 - Install fencing between the house and the water that prevents children from accessing the water without adult supervision.
 - Check your local building codes for requirements for residential fencing and housing complexes.
- If you are away from home near bodies of water, such as a river, lake, pond, canal, or ocean shore:
 - Set expectations and rules for children regarding going in or near the water, and strictly enforce them.
 - Closely and continuously monitor anyone who is unable to recognize the danger that water may pose—especially young children. Children can disappear quickly and are attracted to water. Don't assume that a fence, sign, or verbal warning will keep children away from the water.
 - Swim only in designated swimming areas supervised by lifeguards or other undistracted water watchers who are capable of performing a water rescue.
 - Make sure that those with sufficient skill and maturity to participate in approved activities, such as swimming, boating, or fishing, are doing so in a safe area with appropriate supervision, such as lifeguards, and appropriate equipment, such as life jackets.
 - When in, on, or near the water, insist that children and weak or non-swimmers wear properly-fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets that are appropriate for their weight and water activity.
- Know how to provide proper supervision for children under your care in or near the water:
 - Become [water competent](#) and [learn to swim](#).
 - Understand how risks vary with conditions, such as water depth, water clarity and currents, and adjust supervision and activities accordingly. For example, by choosing a safe swimming area or having participants wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
 - Learn CPR and basic rescue skills.
 - Always designate a [water watcher](#) when in or near water.
 - Practice touch supervision while bathing the very young.
 - In a pool, keep young children within arm's reach.
 - Avoid distractions, such as phone calls or texts.
 - Don't leave a young child unattended, or under the care of another child, even for a moment.