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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.