

# Water Safety for Children

Canada is a land of oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, and backyard pools. Every year across the country, approximately 60 children drown and 10 nearly drown, which often results in serious brain injury. It is crucial for parents and caregivers to exercise extreme caution when children are around water as tragedy can strike anywhere and at any age. Here are some additional things to keep in mind when spending time in the water with your children.

- Stay within arms reach of your children; drowning can occur in as little as 10 seconds, even in a bathtub with as little as 4cm/1.5 inches of water
- Adults should supervise no more than one infant or two children under the age of 3 who are in the water
- Teens should not supervise children in the water without a partner
- Remember that supervising children in the water is a full-time task, not to be combined with reading, chatting on the phone, barbecuing, looking after children who are not in the water, or other activities
- Do not use drugs or alcohol when supervising children in the water
- Teach children about safety around water and establish rules, such as no running on the pool deck
- Restrict access to backyard pools with a fence of sufficient height around the entire perimeter of the pool and a self-closing, self-locking gate
- Ensure that children are wearing an approved lifejacket or personal flotation device that is appropriate to their size and weight
- Remember that there are no lifejackets for children under 9kg/20lbs
- Attach a whistle to the child's lifejacket so they can signal in the event of an emergency



**Drowning is the second most common cause of injury-related death for children under the age of 14 in Canada, with nearly half of these accidents occurring in backyard pools. While many believe drowning is accompanied by screaming, thrashing, and splashing, it is often silent, and can occur in a bathtub, bucket, or even a toilet—in as little as 10 seconds.**

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Half of the toddlers who drown are being supervised but their guardian's attention is momentarily distracted.

## How to stay safe around water:

- Enroll children in swimming lessons at an early age but do not expect that this will prevent accidents or drowning in young children
- Learn basic water rescue techniques like First Aid and CPR
- Have an emergency plan, rescue equipment, and telephone by the pool
- Check for hazards in and around the water, including water pollution levels
- Ensure that children are wearing sunscreen and sufficient SPF (at least 30) and re-apply it after they have been in the water
- Encourage feet-first entry into the water to prevent head and neck injuries
- Be especially attentive if the child has a disorder such as epilepsy or autism
- Keep children out of the water if boats or personal watercraft are nearby
- Drain backyard wading pools and buckets when they are not in use, this helps prevent the risk of West Nile
- Lock all doors and low windows leading out to a body of water so a child cannot venture out on their own and get into difficulty
- When taking children out in a boat, teach them to act appropriately and to not lean over the edge
- Teach children to stay away from ice-covered water in the winter and from edges of fast-moving rivers, creeks, and streams in the spring

**One in every five toddlers who experience near drowning will suffer permanent brain damage.**

**For more information on pool and water safety, visit [www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)**

