



Interior Health



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Splash into Water Safely! Some Safety Tips for Enjoying the Summer Fun.

Swimming, bath time, and water play can be a lot of fun for kids. But if this time isn't carefully supervised, it can also result in potential harm to your little ones. **June 2-9, 2009 is National Water Safety Week** and Interior Health's Injury Prevention Team is asking all families to be informed and cautious to keep their children safe.

Drowning is the second leading cause of preventable death for children under 10 years of age, while children under the age of five are most at risk. That's why Interior Health is warning parents and caregivers to be extra cautious while kids are splashing around.

"It is imperative that children are actively supervised while they are around any source of water," advises Teresa Dobmeier, Interior Health's Injury Prevention Manager.

Most drowning deaths and injuries happen in private swimming pools, followed closely by other bodies of water like lakes and streams. The majority of these incidents occur when children are walking or playing near water, not necessarily when they are swimming or intending to swim.

Young children are often at greater risk of drowning because of their natural curiosity. They also lack a sense of danger and cannot understand the risk. They are top heavy and can easily fall over into water. Their small lungs can fill up quickly and they can drown in as little as 5 cm of water.

But there are things you can do to keep children safe:

- Supervise your children at all times, in, on, and around the water. Stay within sight and reach of your child.
- Swimming lessons aren't for children only--make sure everyone knows how to swim. Even if your child knows how to swim, continue to be vigilant and supervise.
- Going boating? Ensure that every person on the boat is wearing a personal flotation device (PFD). Don't assume that the PFD that your child wore last year is still fine. PFD's are weight and size specific and so they need to be fitted to your child every season.
- Enclose your pool and hot tub with a four-foot high, four-sided fence that has a self-closing and self-latching gate. Remove furniture close to the fence so curious children can't climb the fence.
- Teach children to ask for permission before they go into the water.
- Be clear about water safety rules before your child goes swimming and teach them about water hazards, tides, and currents.
- Flotation devices, like life jackets, water wings, and inflatable toys should not replace parental supervision.

- Don't let your child swim alone and ensure they swim in the daylight so they can see and be seen.
- Children under the age of six should always be watched when in the bathtub. Never turn your back on an infant – even to reach for a towel. Do not put infants in a baby bath seat as they offer a false sense of security – parents mistakenly think their child is safe.
- Parents and pool owners should be trained in CPR and first aid.

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