

Drowning is Quick and Quiet, So Keep Your Eyes on Your Kids around Water *Drowning deaths increase up to 89% in the summer months*

Camp Hill, Pennsylvania — It's a warm summer day and you're at the beach, pool, or just simply near water with your kids. Your cell phone rings and you answer it, shifting your focus from your kids to the conversation. Good idea? Not at all, according to Safe Kids Pennsylvania, and it could even be deadly. Children can get into trouble in a matter of seconds when around water, so Safe Kids Pennsylvania recommends that parents actively supervise – with their eyes on their kids at all times – and use additional layers of protection when children are in or near the water.

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1-14. Overall, approximately 750 children ages 14 and under die each year due to unintentional drownings, and on average, there are an estimated 5,016 injuries to children after near-drowning incidents each year.

“Kids drown quickly and quietly,” said Allyson Fulton of Safe Kids Pennsylvania. “A drowning child cannot cry or shout for help. It is important to remember that simple steps save lives – supervise children when they are in or near water, learn water safety skills like swimming and CPR and for home pools and spas, use barriers and anti-entrapment devices. The most important precaution for parents is active supervision. Simply being near your child is not necessarily supervising.”

To help keep kids safe this pool season, Safe Kids Pennsylvania recommends these precautions:

- Always actively supervise children in and around water. Don't leave, even for a moment. Stay where you can see, hear and reach kids in water. Avoid talking or texting on the phone, preparing a meal, reading and other distractions.
- If you have a pool or spa, or if your child visits a home that has a pool or spa, it should be surrounded on all four sides by a fence at least four feet high with self-closing and self-latching gates that lock. Studies estimate that this type of isolation fencing could prevent 50 to 90 percent of child drownings in residential pools.
- Teach children about the dangers of swimming around drains. Children should not swim or play near any drain or suction outlet.
- Make sure all pools and spas have compliant anti-entrapment drain covers and back up devices to ensure safer places for children to swim.
- Know how to swim and enroll your kids in swimming lessons. Swimming lessons will not make your child immune to drowning, but it is an important skill for both adults and children to learn. There is no substitute for active supervision.
- Don't leave toys in or near the pool, where they could attract unsupervised kids. For extra protection, consider a pool alarm and alarms on the doors, windows and gates leading to the pool.
- Don't rely on inflatable swimming toys such as “water wings” and noodles; these toys should never be used in place of U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets. If your child can't swim, stay within an arm's reach.
- Learn infant and child CPR. In less than two hours, you can learn effective interventions that can give a fighting chance to a child whose breathing and heartbeat have stopped. Contact the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org for information about CPR classes.
- Learn how to use rescue equipment.
- Keep rescue equipment, a phone and emergency numbers nearby in case there is an emergency.

Even a near-drowning incident can have lifelong consequences. Kids who survive a near-drowning may have brain damage, and after four to six minutes under water – the damage is usually irreversible. Although 90 percent of parents say they supervise their children while swimming, many acknowledge that they engage in other distracting activities at the same time – talking, eating, reading or taking care of another child.

“A supervised child is *in sight at all times* with your *undivided attention* focused on the child,” said Fulton. When there are children in or near the water, adults should take turns serving as the designated “Water Watcher,” paying undivided attention. Visit www.PaSafeKids.org to download a free Water Watcher badge or interactive family activities and video games from Pool Safely.

For more information about drowning and water safety, call Safe Kids Pennsylvania at 1-800-683-5100 or visit www.PaSafeKids.org.

Safe Kids Pennsylvania works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Safe Kids Pennsylvania is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Pennsylvania was founded in 1991 and is led by the Center for Schools and Communities.

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