

# Water safety: Simple tips for safe swimming

Water safety is as important as a suit and towel when you're swimming. Before you dive in, review these basic water-safety tips.

Swimming is a great way to relax and beat the summer heat. Before you pack your towels or slather on the sunscreen, review these basic water-safety tips. Simple precautions are the key to safe swimming.

## At the pool

When you're swimming in a pool or lounging in a hot tub, common sense reigns.

- **Follow the rules.** Don't run around the pool or drink from glass containers.
- **Keep an eye on your kids.** Even strong swimmers need adult supervision. Insist on life jackets for children who can't swim. If you need to leave the pool area — even for a minute — take your children with you.
- **Make sure the water is clean.** The water should be clear and free of leaves, dead insects and other debris.
- **Stay away from drains, filters and water intakes.** Loose hair or clothing can get tangled in these structures — possibly trapping you under the water.
- **Monitor electrical power.** Keep electrical appliances — TVs, radios and disc players, for example — a safe distance from the water. Never operate an electrical appliance when you're wet.
- **Locate the emergency equipment.** Find the first-aid kit, and look for a flotation ring to throw to an exhausted swimmer and an extension pole to pull the swimmer to safety.

If you have a home pool, make sure the pool fence meets current safety standards — including a child-proof gate that's always closed. If you have a hot tub, keep it drained or securely covered when not in use.

## At the lake, river or ocean

If you'll be swimming in the open water, you'll need to take a few extra precautions.

- **Stay within designated swimming areas.** These areas — which are usually marked off by ropes or buoys — are more likely to be free of weeds, rocky underwater terrain and other dangers. If you can, swim in an area that has a lifeguard.
- **Heed warnings.** Don't swim in water known to be polluted. Pay attention to warning flags for high tides and other dangers.
- **Test the water depth before you dive in.** Diving into water that's too shallow may lead to neck injuries or paralysis.
- **Know your limits.** Cold water, currents and other conditions on the open water can challenge swimmers. Start out slowly, and don't swim too far from shore.
- **Don't fight a strong current.** If you get caught in a current, swim parallel to the shore until you feel the current relax — then swim gradually toward shore.
- **Protect your feet.** Wear sandals or shoes on the beach to protect your feet from hot sand, broken glass and sharp seashells.

- **Steer clear of plant and animal life.** Jellyfish, stingrays and other marine animals can cause painful stings or allergic reactions. Brushing up against certain types of seaweed or coral can result in painful scratches and scrapes.

## Staying cool

There's more to water safety than precautions in the water. When you're outdoors, protect your skin with generous amounts of sunscreen. To avoid heatstroke and dehydration, drink plenty of water — even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid drinks that contain caffeine or alcohol. If you think you've had too much sun, head indoors. Sometimes calling it a day early is the best way to make a splash.

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