

Beach Safety Tips

From Water Safety Expert
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Sun & Sand – A Day at the Beach!

Millions of people worldwide head to the beach every summer – whether to swim, boat, fish or just lay out in the sun. Water-based recreation is the number one recreational activity during the summer.

But a day at the beach can quickly become deadly if basic safety precautions are not observed. Natural bodies of water are an ever-present danger to our children. Among drowning deaths of children aged 5-14 years, over 50% occurred in open-water areas such as lakes, rivers and ponds.

Many people simply overestimate their swimming ability. Swimming in a pool is much different than swimming in a lake or the ocean. Cold water temperatures and even small waves can quickly tire a person out.

Once distressed, victims quickly lose strength, may begin to panic, and may start to submerge, making it difficult to

breathe. This leads to a drowning scenario which on a busy day may go unnoticed by other swimmers and even lifeguards.

Parents, Please Actively Supervise Your Children Whenever They Are Around the Water!

You are responsible for your child’s safety. Lifeguards are able to assist in times of need, but they can’t see everything. If you’ve ever experienced your child briefly wandering away from you while you are watching them, consider how difficult it would be to watch 50 people, 100 people, 500 people or more all day long.

When supervising children around the water, your undistracted attention is needed. It only takes seconds for a child to drown - a moment’s dereliction can lead to a lifetime of remorse. Your children should be your sole focus whenever at the beach.



US Army Corps of Engineers water safety education campaign.

Selecting a “Safe” Place to Swim

Not every body of water is appropriate for swimming. Follow these guidelines:

- Swim at clean and well-maintained designated swimming areas with lifeguards present.
- Inspect the water before your child goes in. Swim only in areas free from underwater hazards, such as reeds, rocks and sudden drop-offs.
- Do not rely on inflatable devices or rafts – these may deflate, fall off or blow away! “Water wings” or “swimmies” are not a substitute for a properly sized and fitted U.S. Coast Guard approved lifejacket.
- Rivers present special safety hazards, including the possibility of currents and fast-rising water. The water may look calm, but in reality it can be moving at a very fast speed.
- Chest deep is too deep! Past this point, buoyancy starts to kick in and children can quickly find themselves drifting too far out.
- To minimize the risk of getting sick after a day at the beach, teach children to avoid putting the water in their mouths.
- *Constant supervision is needed.*



Children can quickly wander away from parents. Children that become separated from their parents are often the targets of predators. Pay careful attention to children whenever in, on or around the water. A temporary lapse in supervision can carry life-long repercussions.

Safety First ~ Start at Home!

A healthy respect for the powerful and deadly force of the water should be fostered from an early age. Waterfront safety starts before you leave your home for the beach!

- Everyone should learn to swim.
- Remind children not to go out into the water beyond their chests and what you as a parent will do if you see this occur. Consider a “time out” to show that you mean business.
- Consider bringing U.S. Coast Guard approved lifejackets to the beach rather than rafts or inflatable toys.
- Supervise your children. If with a group of friends, designate a responsible adult to watch the kids and rotate this job among adults.
- Be sure to pack books, cards and other activities for children to do on the sand.
- Sleeping on lounge chairs, reading books and talking to friends can have deadly consequences. Please stay with your child, at all times providing close, active supervision.
- Always follow posted safety rules, particularly for slides and attractions.

Safety at the Ocean

The ocean is a powerful force which many often underestimate, particularly visitors from inland areas. Always remember that the ocean can be deadly and often deceiving. Even quiet areas on a beach with surf could pose major risks. Keep these safety tips in mind:

- Always select a beach with lifeguard services and ask the lifeguard about conditions before you go swimming.
- Knee deep may be too deep for weak swimmers. Swimming in the ocean is much different than in a pool. Use extreme caution.
- Pay attention to all advisory flags flown at the beach and be sure to know what each color means. Many beaches post this information online – it’s best to check beach conditions before you go!
- If caught in a rip current, relax. Stay afloat. Signal for help. When free of the rip, swim diagonally to shore. Don’t fight the rip – you’ll lose.



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Water Safety Research Online

The internet presents a wealth of water safety information for parents. Although safety around the water is considered “common sense” to most, unfortunately many lives are lost each year because parents fail to appreciate the dangers that come along with water recreation. If you value your child’s life, please take the time to read through the water safety information available at:

- <http://www.usa.safekids.org/water/>
- <http://www.usa.safekids.org/NSKW.cfm>
- <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/healthtips/safetywater.html>
- <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/210.pdf>