



Swimming Pool Safety Tips For Children

Written On August 10, 2009 By [Bob Kraft](#)

Sadly, the number of child drowning deaths in Texas reached 84 in early August of 2009, passing the previous record of 82 set in 2008. We all need to take better care of our kid when they're near water — whether it's a swimming pool at your own house, or a lake or ocean. Here are some safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics, from other sources, and from experiences with my children when they were young:

- Teaching your child how to swim does not mean your child is safe in water. If you have a pool, protect your children by supervising them at all times and being prepared in case of an emergency.
- Make sure adults are trained in life-saving techniques and CPR so they can rescue a child if necessary.
- Surround your pool on all four sides with a sturdy five-foot-high fence. (This rule could vary depending on local ordinances.)
- Make sure the gates self-close and self-latch at a height children can't reach.
- Keep rescue equipment such as a shepherd's hook (a long pole with a hook on the end), a life preserver and a portable telephone near the pool.
- Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as "floaties." They are not a substitute for approved life vests and can give children a false sense of security.

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- Children are not developmentally ready for swim lessons until about age four. Swim programs for children under four are worthwhile, but should not be relied upon as a way to decrease the risk of drowning.
- Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's length, providing "touch supervision."
- Even older children should not swim alone without adult supervision. A child, or an adult for that matter, can develop a cramp underwater, or have an accident while diving.
- Don't leave very young children alone even with small portable pools or water containers like buckets, fountains, or hot tubs. There is always a danger of kids drowning even in small amounts of water. Bathtubs can be every bit as dangerous as swimming pools. If you have a toddler in the tub, don't walk away for even one minute. The child can slip, hit his head and drown before you can walk to the kitchen and back.
- If you have a backyard swimming pool, make sure that the pool cover is completely removed from the pool. Don't partially open the pool. Also make sure that your child does not walk on the pool cover while it is on the pool.
- Always keep your eyes on the child or children. Designate a child watcher, whether you or someone else, when you attend a party or have friends or family over.
- Talk with baby-sitters about pool safety, supervision, and drowning prevention.
- Don't be distracted by doorbells, phone calls, chores, or conversations. If you must leave the pool area, take the child with you, making sure the pool gate latches securely when it closes.
- Unsupervised activity by non-swimmers can become dangerous. Don't be afraid to ask if your guests can swim. If they can't, make sure a swimmer is present at all times.

- Don't swim alone or allow others to swim alone; make sure there's somebody nearby who can answer a distress call.
- Don't allow anyone who has been drinking alcohol to use the pool.
- Keep children away from pool filters, as the suction force may injure them or prevent them from surfacing.
- Check the pool area regularly for glasses, bottles, toys, or other potential accident hazards.
- Remove all toys from the pool after use so children aren't tempted to reach for them.
- Post rules such as "No running," "No pushing," "No dunking," and "Never swim alone." Enforce the rules.
- Keep radios and other electrical devices away from pools or nearby wet surfaces.
- Treat diving boards with respect. Never dive into an above-ground pool and always check the water depth before plunging into an in-ground pool.
- Stay out of the pool during rain storms or during thunder or lightning.
- Encourage your neighbors to follow pool safety guidelines, including keeping their back gates and doors locked, and their pool gates securely closed and latched.

Following all these suggestions still won't guarantee that drownings or injuries won't occur, but we must do all that we can to reduce the risk. A record number of drownings reached with a month or longer left in the swimming season is tragic.