

## **Water Safety: Information and Prevention**

In the United States, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children, taking more than 2,000 young lives each year. Young children, age four and under, have the highest drowning death rate. Of the 13 Missouri children who drowned in 2006, six (46%) were age four and under.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that children must be watched by an adult at all times when in or near water. Children can drown in swimming pools, other bodies of water, and standing water around the home. Examples of standing water include:

- Bathtubs, even with baby bathtub “supporting ring” devices
- Buckets and pails, especially 5-gallon buckets and diaper pails
- Ice chests with melted ice
- Toilets
- Hot tubs, spas, and whirlpools
- Fish ponds, fountains
- Irrigation ditches, post holes, and wells

**There are many things that can be done to prevent In-Home drowning deaths. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission suggests the following:**

- Never leave a baby alone in a bathtub even for a second. Always keep a baby within arm’s reach.
- Never leave young children alone or with young siblings in a bathtub even if you are using a bath seat or ring. Children can drown quickly and silently.
- Keep the toilet lid down, and keep young children out of the bathroom when unsupervised. Consider placing a latch on the bathroom door out of reach of young children.
- Be sure all containers that hold liquids are emptied immediately after use. Do not leave empty containers in yards or around the house where they may accumulate water and attract young children.
- Always secure the safety cover on your spa or hot tub.
- Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation); it can save a life.

**The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests more tips to prevent In-Home drowning deaths:**

- Empty all buckets, pails, and bathtubs completely after each use-do not leave them filled and unattended.
- Set your water heat thermostat so that the hottest temperature at the faucet is 120°F to avoid burns.
- Watch children closely when they are playing near wells, open post holes, or irrigation or drainage ditches. Fill in empty holes or have fences installed to protect your child.
- Caution children about the risks of drowning during the winter by falling through thin ice.

**Many children drown in swimming pools or while playing in water every year. Many of these deaths are preventable. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests tips to prevent drowning deaths while children are playing in water:**

- Never let a child swim in any body of water without an adult watching.
- Be sure the adult watching your child knows how to swim, get emergency help, and perform CPR.
- Teach children safety rules and make sure they are obeyed.
- Teach children to swim once he or she is ready (usually around 5 years old).

- Keep a life preserver and shepherd's hook in the pool area to help pull a child to the edge of the pool when necessary.
- Don't let young children and children who can not swim use inflatable toys or mattresses in water that is above the waist.
- Teach your child safety rules and make sure these are obeyed: Never swim alone, Never dive into water except when permitted by an adult who knows the depth of the water and who has checked for underwater objects, Always use a life jacket when on a boat, fishing, or playing in a river or stream.
- If there is a pool in the yard, put up a fence to separate your house from the pool. Most young children who drown in pools wander out of the house and fall into the pool. Install a fence at least 4 feet high around all 4 sides of the pool. The fence will completely separate the pool from the house and play area of the yard. Use gates that self-close and self-latch, with latches higher than your children's reach.
- A power safety cover that meets the standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) adds to the protection of your children but should not be used in place of the fence between your house and pool. Even fencing around your pool and using a power safety cover will not prevent all drownings.
- Remove all toys from the pool after use so children aren't tempted to reach for them.
- After the children are done swimming, secure the pool so they can't get back into it.

**For more information on Water Safety, visit these web sites:**

- American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/watersafety.cfm>
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PREREL/prhtml03/03177.html>
- Safe Kids USA, <http://www.usa.safekids.org/NSKW.cfm>