



Water Safety

By Carrie Danner, MD

Summer is upon us bringing record temps, and families tend to spend more time in lakes and pools. It's not only fun, but also great exercise to be in the water. It's important to know how to be safe and to protect yourself and your children from serious injuries and drowning which can occur around pools and bodies of water.

Never assume that a child is safe around the water. Accidents can happen in the blink of an eye. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends swimming lessons for children, but most children do not learn how to swim well until age 5 or later. Remember that kids develop at different rates as well, and swimming lessons **DO NOT GUARANTEE** safety. Even experienced swimmers have been known to drown in a few feet of water. A responsible adult needs to be present at all times and not distracted by a cell phone, texting, socializing, computers, chores, or alcohol.

Some general pool safety rules:

- Empty small pools after each use (plastic, inflatable)
- No running near a pool
- No horseplay or dunking
- No eating, drinking, or glass containers in the pool
- No appliances near the pool
- Only pool type toys in the pool area
- Remove all toys after use so children are not tempted to reach for them
- Do not dive in a pool that is not deep enough

With infants and toddlers, a responsible adult needs to be in the water at arm's reach at all times. For older children, a responsible adult needs to be present and watching at all times. Do not depend on lifeguards – while they are great, but they have many kids to watch and pools can be crowded.

Most young children who drown do so by wandering out of the house and into the pool. If you have a pool at home, install a four foot fence to completely surround the pool or spa. There should be no way for a child to grab or step up to climb over. The fence should be strong mesh or vertical slats. Chain link is easy to climb and should be avoided. Gates should be self closing and have a latch higher than your child can reach. Pool alarms, door alarms, window guards, safety latches on house doors, and pool covers are helpful, but not sufficient to protect children from the pool.

And remember; never leave a child alone near a pool at any time, not even for a moment. Learn CPR, which is offered in many locations and often free of charge. Keep rescue devices and a telephone near the pool. Inflatable "water wings," "noodles," and pool flotation rings are not substitutes for approved life vests.

Conditions are different for swimming in rivers, lakes, and beaches, as visibility, depth, and other hazards such as boats, fishermen, and waves or undertows can exist. Be especially cautious in these situations, and always keep approved life vests on children.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

Cedar Park Pediatric and Family Medicine

Appointments: (512) 336.2777

Main Office: 345 Cypress Creek Rd., Ste. 104 Cedar Park, Texas 78613

920 N Vista Ridge Blvd., Ste. 500 Cedar Park, Texas 78613

www.cedarparkdoctors.com