Child Swim Safety

What You Need To Know To Keep Your Child Safe Around Water

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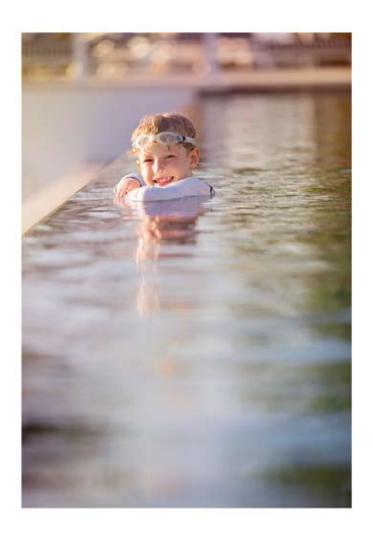# Table of Contents

Introduction

Summer is a unique time of the year, especially for families with school-aged children – kids are usually out of school, the days are much longer, and, depending on where you live, the temperature can range from hot to hotter to hottest. That's why one of the most popular ways to beat the heat and keep the kids occupied is visiting places with water, like the neighborhood pool. And, while visits to pools, lakes, creeks, and the beach can be a fun and refreshing way to spend the lazy days of summer, they can also be incredibly dangerous for kids.

Did you know that, after birth defects, drowning is the leading cause of death for children under the age of four? And did you know that, for kids five to 15, drowning is the second most common cause of death? In fact, more kids die by drowning than in car accidents. These are stunning statistics, and ones that most people just don't know about. Drowning is a major cause for concern among parents and families, but it's often one that's not widely publicized or discussed.

Recent news stories – like the tragic drowning of Olympic skier Bode Miller's toddler – have brought attention to this serious issue and highlight the importance of practicing water safety with your children at all times.

At Daggett Shuler, we recognize the importance of having strong water safety rules as well as the heartbreaking consequences for children when they're not observed. That's why we put together this child water safety e-book with information and guidelines to help keep your children and your whole family safe all summer long – whether your summer takes you to the pool, the beach, or anywhere between.

Misconceptions About Drowning

Real-life drowning does not look like it does in the movies and on TV. There is no shouting, no thrashing about or dramatic movements, no crying for help, and it isn't a long, drawn-out event.

Many parents mistakenly believe that if their child were in distress while in the water, they'd be able to hear it. In reality, true drowning is usually silent. Because the child is struggling to breathe and often inhaling water, they can't shout or cry out for help.

Similarly, most drowning victims don't make dramatic splashes or movements indicating that they need help. As a result, drowning can often go unnoticed by even those who are very close nearby.

Additionally, many parents are comfortable leaving their children unattended in the water for a few

minutes, with the rationale of "what could happen in such as short amount of time?" But drowning, especially for young children with no swimming skills, can happen in as little as 20-30 seconds.

One recent drowning story from the news is that of a toddler who drowned in a pool after his mom turned around for a few seconds to take a bite of brownie. When she jumped into the pool in an attempt to rescue him, she still had the brownie in her mouth. The little boy had drowned in less than a minute.

Another common misconception is that only children who don't know how to swim can drown. The fact remains that a significant percentage of child drowning victims every year have swimming experience and were considered strong swimmers. A variety of factors, including fatigue and currents (especially in open water like oceans and rivers), can make even the most experienced swimmer vulnerable to drowning.

Now that we've taken a look at some of the more common myths and misconceptions around drowning, let's discuss what we can all do to keep our kids safe around water.

8 Tips To Keep Your Child Safe In The Water

1. Never Take Your Eyes off Your Kids: While the pool or beach may have designated lifeguards, they should never be used as a substitute for you keeping an eye on your kids when they are in or even near the water. As noted above, drowning can happen in less than a minute and lifeguards often have their attention split in many different directions. You know your child best and, by keeping an eye on them (without distraction – that means no phone), you are better able to recognize any distress quickly and rescue them from danger.

2. Establish Water Rules Early: Establishing and enforcing strict rules around water as early as possible is critical to helping kids stay safe. For example, kids should never be allowed to swim without an adult nearby who is actively supervising. Children should also know not to play near or around water (such as on pool decks or lake docks) without adult supervision. Many of these rules may adjust and change based on your child's age, their

swimming ability, and the water environment, but the key is to set up rules around water safety, repeat them often, and enforce them strictly.

3. Invest in Swimming Lessons Early: Similar to establishing water rules early, one of the best ways to keep your child safe is to teach them how to swim. While many parents wait until a child is four or older to begin swim lessons, children as young as 12 months can participate in baby and toddler swim classes that focus on self-rescue by teaching children how to float and how to climb out of bodies of water, such as a pool. Swimming lessons are a great way to make sure that your child is capable of safely playing in the water and getting themself out of a difficult situation, if one arises. They also help kids develop a healthy level of respect for water and the dangers it can present.

4. In a Big Group, Assign a Chaperone: Ironically, many drownings occur when there are many people around, such as during backyard barbecues or a busy day at the beach. If there are many adults around and many kids playing, it's a good idea to designate a specific person to supervise the people in the water. This can be a rotating position, but make sure that there is always one person whose job is to keep an eye on kids in the water, and that they are doing so undistracted.

5. Make Sure Pools Have High-Fencing: Whenever possible, all pools and other bodies of water, such as hot tubs, should have gates around them on all sides

Other Water Dangers And Safety Tips

While the tips in chapter two cover a majority of scenarios, below are three additional areas of water safety that fall outside of those general rules but are nonetheless still very important.

Bathtub Dangers & Safety: While a pool and a bathtub may seem drastically different, children can drown in as little as two to three inches of water, and their evening bath can present just as much danger as a ten foot deep pool with a diving board. Never leave a child unattended in the bath, or even with a slightly older sibling, even if it's just for a minute to answer the phone or grab a towel. Make sure to have all supplies needed – soap, shampoo, toys, and towels – ready before children are in the water and let the door or phone go unanswered until bath time is done.

Open Water Currents: Rip currents (in oceans) and strong water currents (in rivers, creeks, and streams) can present largely invisible dangers to swimmers of all ages and skill levels. For that reason, make sure everyone in your family knows what to do if they get caught in a rip current or a strong river current. And it's always a good idea to have everyone wearing

U.S. Coast Guard certified life vests or personal flotation devices (PFDs) anytime they're in or around open water such as lakes, rivers, and oceans.

Dry Drowning: Another largely unknown danger that has recently been gaining a lot of social media attention is dry drowning. This type of drowning occurs when a child inhales a significant amount of water during their time in the pool or lake and then, later, drowns in their sleep because of the excess water in their lungs. It's important to note that, while a possibility, dry drowning is extremely rare and is associated with a number of other symptoms. Children with too much water in their lungs will exhibit symptoms such as coughing, difficulty breathing, confusion, or uncharacteristic irritability. If your child inhaled a significant amount of water at the pool or beach and is exhibiting these symptoms, take them to the emergency room right away. However, generally, kids are more likely to swallow a lot of water, rather than inhaling it, which is less problematic, and there has never been a documented case of a child dry drowning while exhibiting no other symptoms.

To sum up, the two most important strategies in keeping kids safe around any kind of water are attention and prevention. As long as you are paying attention and taking all necessary steps for prevention, a majority of drowning scenarios can be safely avoided.

We're Here For You

All parents have the best intentions when it comes to keeping their kids safe, happy, and healthy, especially in the hot summer months. But accidents still can and do happen all the time.

At Daggett Shuler, we're here to help. If you lost a child or another loved one to drowning or have questions about any of the information in this e-book, we offer free, no obligation consultations. We'd be happy to answer any questions or discuss your family's situation to help you understand your options and next steps.Find us online at www.DaggettShulerLaw.com or give us a call at 336-724-1234. We look forward to speaking with you!