



Keeping your child safe from drowning



Young children can be fascinated by water, and swimming is great for a child's health and fitness. Here are some tips to make sure that their time in the water is fun and safe.

Did you know...?

- Babies and toddlers drown silently and can drown in as little as 5cm of water. So even rainwater collecting in a bucket can be a danger for a small child.
- Most drownings involving two to three year olds happen in the home and garden.
- A wind blowing off the land makes the sea look flat and calm but it can sweep airbeds or inflatable toys out to sea dangerously quickly.
- Young children can also drown in swimming pools. In the last six years, 30 children under 10 have drowned in a hotel or villa pool abroad. This usually happens when they wander away from their parents and fall into the pool.

Safety reminders – how to stop children from drowning

Babies

Babies can't control their movements so won't be able to get themselves out of trouble if they slip under the water in the bath. They also don't make any noise or struggle, but just drown silently, so you might not know anything has happened until it's too late.

- Stay with your baby all the time when they're in the bath, even if there is an older brother or sister in the bath with them.
- Remember that bath seats aren't safety devices – babies can wriggle free of them.

Toddlers

As babies begin to crawl and then walk they are more and more likely to explore. They may have more control over their limbs but they still may not be able to get themselves out of trouble if they go under the water in the bath or fall into the garden pond.

- In the bath your child needs you to stay with them at all times. Remember to empty the bath as soon as you've finished.
- If you have a pond and a young child or baby they will be safer if you fill it in, fence it off or securely cover it. And make sure your garden is secure so that your child can't get to the neighbours' pond.
- It's safest to empty your paddling pool after you've finished using it.

Older children

As children get older they love to test their skills and challenge themselves. They may start to feel confident about swimming but can overestimate what they can do. It's a good idea to teach them about safety around water.

- Children under 8 years old need to be supervised around water. They might understand instructions but are likely to forget if they are having fun or are excited.
- Encourage children to swim in safe places like swimming pools that have trained lifeguards.
- Explain to them that swimming in canals, lakes or rivers is dangerous as, even if they are strong swimmers, things like strong currents, deep water and objects lurking in the water that you can't see are all really dangerous.
- When children and young people are carrying out activities such as canoeing or sailing or are on a small boat, they should always wear appropriate personal flotation devices (buoyancy aids or lifejackets depending on the circumstances).

At the beach

- Teach your child to swim between the two-coloured red and yellow flags – these are the areas patrolled by lifeguards.
- Think twice before letting your child take an inflatable into the sea as it's easy for them to be blown out to sea quickly. If there's an orange windsock flying this means it is especially dangerous.
- Always constantly supervise children when they are in the sea.