

Keep Water Safety a Part of Summer

Fishing, boating, or relaxing by the pool, water is never far from many of our summer activities. In the blink of an eye though, summer fun can turn tragic, especially for our children. It doesn't have to be!

Annually, over 3,500 people die from unintentional drownings in the United States—about ten deaths per day. One in five of those who die from drowning are children 14 years-old and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency care for non-fatal submersion injuries. Many of these suffer severe brain damage that can result in long-term disabilities.

Drowning is the second-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children 14 years-old and younger. The 1 to 4-year-old age group has the highest drowning rates among children. A review of Ohio drowning deaths in this age group revealed that 52% occurred in swimming pools, while 25% occurred in open water such as lakes, rivers, and ponds. 11% of these deaths occurred in bathtubs.

Drowning deaths occur quickly. While 37% of those reviews indicated the child was not supervised at the time, an equal number of reviews noted that the child was within sight of a supervisor, or had been seen within minutes of the accident. A survey for the American Red Cross revealed that 44% of Americans don't know basic water-safety skills.

A few factors increasing drowning risk deserve special attention. The US Coast Gard reports that 72% of boating deaths were caused by drowning, with 88% of the victims not wearing life jackets. Alcohol is involved in up to 70% of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation. For people with seizure disorders, drowning is the most common cause of unintentional injury-death, the majority occurring in the bathtub.

The good news is there are many steps you can take to stay safe in the water and keep it a fun part of summer. First and foremost, learn how to swim and make sure family members know how as well. Research has shown that formal swimming lessons can protect young children from drowning.

Supervision is key when around water. Designate a responsible adult to actively watch young children while in the bath and all children swimming or playing in and around water. Touch Supervision, or being close enough to reach the child at all times should be used when supervising pre-school children.

Using the Buddy System and never swimming alone, avoiding alcohol before and during water activities, and wearing life-jackets when boating can significantly reduce the risk of tragedy. Lastly, learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. In the time it takes for the emergency medical service to arrive, your CPR skills could save a life.

For additional information of water safety, contact the Adams County Health Department at 937-544-5547.

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