



Surround your pool with precaution!

As temperatures sizzle and Fourth of July blasts us with heat and humidity, families all over North America are enjoying the splashy refuge of swimming pools. But while parks and beaches have trained lifeguards on duty to keep us safe, most home pools do not.

Each year, more than 300 children under 5 years old drown in residential swimming pools, often in their own backyard, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). In fact, drowning is the fourth-leading cause of death for children under the age of 5 and the leading cause of death for children under the age of 2. More than 3,000 children go to the hospital due to submersion injuries, often resulting in lengthy hospital stays to treat brain damage and other disabilities.

The safety experts at Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) and the National Safety Council (NSC) encourage everyone to follow a few simple safety tips to keep our summer fun safe and splash-tastic.

General pool tips

Alan McMillan, president of NSC, recommends constant supervision as the primary element in preventing pool and beach tragedies. He reminds us that children should always be supervised by an adult and never by other children.

"Your attention must stay on the child at all times," said McMillan. "Child drowning is a silent death that alerts no one with splashes or yells for help. Good supervision means you are able to scan the whole area within 10 seconds and can reach the pool within 20 seconds. Even at parties, make sure you designate an adult to watch swimming children."

Other safety tips include:

- If a child is missing, and a pool is in the area, always check the pool first. Every second counts in preventing a drowning accident.
- Don't allow young children to swim unsupervised just because they've had swimming lessons.
- Flotation devices and toys and inflatable swimming aids are not babysitters, and they are not safety devices.
- Keep several rescue devices such as life preservers within pool's reach. Be sure a telephone is poolside with emergency numbers posted nearby.
- Remove all toys when you leave the pool. Floats, balls and other toys may attract children to the pool when it is unattended, and they may fall in.
- If you own a pool, make sure you know infant and child CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- If you own a pool, your children should already be taking swimming lessons.

Multiple safety barriers

John Drengenberg, UL's manager of Global Consumer Affairs, recommends using various layers of protection between children and pools as another step in preventing accidents. These barriers could include a fence with a gate, pool cover, and even pool alarms.

"The idea behind multiple barriers is to provide backup systems that will delay a child's efforts to get near the pool. If you have multiple barriers, your child has to bypass all of them before reaching the pool. This should give you time to prevent any possible accidents. But remember, barriers are no substitute for adult supervision," said Drengenberg, who noted that in many drowning accidents children had been missing for less than five minutes.

Other safety tips include:

- Install a 4-foot fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate that has a locking mechanism beyond a child's reach. The fence should completely separate the pool from the house and play area of the yard.
- Pool covers are not just for keeping debris out -- they can also be safety devices. Power safety covers are recommended for in-ground pools and will inhibit children from getting near the water.
- Pool motion alarms, motion sensor alarms and gate alarms offer added security. All emit piercing sounds that alert you to anyone approaching or jumping into the pool.
- Remove all ladders and portable steps from above-ground pools when not in use.
- Always drain wading pools after your children are done playing. Infants can drown in just a few inches of water.
- Make sure the pool is in plain view from the house. Remove any shrubs, vegetation or bushes that obstruct a clear view to the pool.
- Remove any chairs or ladders from the area to prevent children from climbing over any fence surrounding the pool. Tree limbs should be removed and overhanging roofs made inaccessible.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>

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