



Water Safety and Drowning Prevention



New York State Education Law requires school districts to provide families with information about drowning prevention, water safety and safe and healthy swimming. This information is intended to help families understand water-related risks and promote safe practices in, on and around water.

WATER SAFETY FIRST: PREVENT DROWNING

Each year, hundreds of people in New York state lose their lives to drowning. It can happen to anyone, anywhere there is water. Drowning is often quick and silent, and its signs are not always obvious. Someone in distress may appear to be splashing or waving, when in reality they are struggling to stay afloat.

Drowning is often silent and can happen in seconds. Protect children with these water safety practices.

CONSTANT SUPERVISION

- **Watch Actively:** Keep children in sight at all times near water
- **Stay Close:** Keep young children within arm's reach
- **Never Swim Alone:** Children should always swim with a responsible adult present and never swim alone, even if they are strong swimmers
- **Avoid Distractions:** Set aside phones, reading materials and other tasks during swim time
- **Designate a Water Watcher:** Assign one adult to focus solely on monitoring swimmers
- **Rotate Watchers:** Switch adults every 15 minutes to maintain alertness

BARRIERS AND HOME SAFETY

- **Pool Fences:** Install 4-foot fencing around all home pools
- **Remove Toys:** Clear floats out of the pool after use so children are not tempted to reach

Self-Closing

- **Gates:** Use gates that latch automatically out of reach
- **Drain Hazards:** Empty inflatable pools, buckets, and coolers after use
- **Bathroom Safety:** Keep toilet lids latched and bathroom doors closed
- **Alarms:** Place alarms on doors leading to the pool area

EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

- **Life Jackets:** Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved vests, not inflatable toys
- **Swim Lessons:** Enroll children in formal swimming classes early
- **CPR Classes:** Parents and caregivers should know child CPR
- **Rescue Gear:** Keep a life ring and phone near the pool
- **Evaluate where you are:** Know the risks in different water environments



UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT WATER HAZARDS

POOLS AND WATER PARKS

- **Obey Signs:** Follow all posted safety rules and lifeguard instructions
- **Avoid Running:** Prevent slips and falls on wet pool decks
- **Check Depth:** Confirm safe depth before diving

LAKES AND RIVERS

- **Expect Currents:** Be aware of hidden undertows and moving water
- **Check Clarity:** Watch out for rocks, vegetation and low visibility
- **Wear Vests:** Always wear life jackets, regardless of swimming ability

OCEAN BEACHES

- **Swim Near Guards:** Only swim in designated areas with a lifeguard on duty
- **Spot Riptides:** Look for breaks in the waves or channels in choppy water
- **Escape Rip Currents:** Swim parallel to the shore until free, then swim inward

BOATING

- Practice safe boating habits at all times.
- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket (I-III label).
- Avoid relying on inflatable swimming aids, such as water wings and pool floats, in place of an approved life jacket.

HEALTHY SWIMMING PRACTICES

- Keep children out of the water if they have diarrhea or a stomach illness.
- Shower for at least one minute before entering the pool.
- Teach children not to swallow pool water or water from natural bodies of water.
- Schedule regular bathroom breaks for children at least once every hour.

For more information, visit www.health.ny.gov/SwimSafe

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