



Beach and Pool Safety

Learn to swim.

Learning to swim is the best defense against drowning. Teach children to swim at an early age. Children who are not taught when they are very young tend to avoid swim instruction as they age, probably because of embarrassment. Swimming instruction is a crucial step to protecting children from injury or death.

Swim near a lifeguard.

United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) statistics show that the chance of drowning at a beach without lifeguard protection is almost five times as great as drowning at a beach with lifeguards. Check in with a lifeguard before you enter the water. They can tell you about water conditions and other safety information.

At home you're the lifeguard.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) reports that for children ages 1 to 4, drowning is most likely to happen in a pool. Many of these deaths occur in the few moments it takes a parent to answer a telephone or doorbell. NEVER leave a child alone anywhere near a pool. Make sure the pool is completely fenced, that the gate self latches and has a functioning lock, and that there is no access from the home to the pool. Don't let your child or a neighbor's child get into the pool without adult supervision.

Swim with a buddy.

Many drownings involve those swimming alone. When you swim with a buddy, if one of you has a problem, the other may be able to help, including signaling for assistance. At the very least, you can have someone onshore watching you.

Check in with the lifeguards.

Lifeguards work continually to identify hazards that might affect you. They can advise you on the safest place to swim, as well as places to avoid. They want you to have a safe experience. Talk to a lifeguard when you arrive at the beach and ask for their advice.

Enter water feet first.

Serious injuries, including paraplegia, occur every year because of diving head first into unknown water and striking the bottom. Bodysurfing can result in a serious neck injury when the swimmer's neck strikes the bottom. Check for depth and obstructions before diving, then go in feet first the first time. Use caution while bodysurfing, always extending a hand ahead of you.



Learn rip current safety.

USLA has found that about 80 percent of rescues by USLA affiliated lifeguards at ocean beaches are caused by rip currents. These currents are formed by surf and gravity, because once surf pushes water up the slope of the beach, gravity pulls it back. This can create concentrated rivers of water moving offshore. Some people mistakenly call this an undertow, but there is no undercurrent, just an offshore current. If you are caught in a rip current, remain calm and don't fight it by trying to swim directly to shore. Instead, swim parallel to shore until you feel the current relax, then swim to shore. Most rip currents are narrow and a short swim parallel to shore will bring you to safety.

Obey posted signs and flags.

It sometimes seems as though there are too many signs, but the ones at the beach are intended to help keep you safe and inform you about local regulations. Read the signs when you first arrive and follow their instruction. Flags may be flown by lifeguards to advise of hazards and regulations that change from time to time. You can usually find informational signs explaining the meaning of the flags, or ask the lifeguard.

Wear a life jacket.

California requires those in a boat fewer than 16 feet in length (or canoes/kayaks of any length) must wear a life jacket. Anyone on a personal watercraft (also known as a jetski) or being towed by a vessel must wear a life jacket. On recreational vessels underway, children under 13 must wear a life jacket. Visit bit.ly/2ErIOOX for much more detailed information on life jackets and boating safety.

Use sunscreen and drink water.

Everyone loves a sunny day, but exposure to the sun affects your body. Without sunscreen, you can be seriously burned. The sun's rays can also cause permanent skin damage and skin cancer. To protect yourself, always choose "broad spectrum" sunscreen rated from 15 to 50 SPF, or clothing that covers your skin. For optimum protection, reapply sunscreen regularly throughout the day. The sun can also dehydrate you quickly. Drink lots of water and avoid alcohol, which contributes to dehydration. Lifeguards treat people for heat exhaustion and heat stroke from time to time. If you feel ill, be sure to contact a lifeguard.

Keep the beach and water clean.

Nobody likes to see the beach or water littered with trash. Even in places where beach cleaning services pick up trash daily, it may linger on the beach for hours, causing an unsightly mess and threatening the health of birds and animals. Do your part. Pick up after yourself and others. Everyone will appreciate you for it.