



Water Safety Tips for Parents

It's summertime, and if you think your children are ready to test the waters and learn to swim, make sure you are ready, too!

From the Bay to the Gulf to your neighbor's backyard, when it comes to water, Pinellas County is just about overflowing! So, it is important that if your children aren't as proficient on sea as they are on land, you take the proper precautions to keep them out of troubled waters. May is National Water Safety Month, so before you register your children for swimming lessons, learn a lesson about what you can do to ensure their safety with these top 10 Water Safety Tips for Parents:

1. SOUND THE SIRENS

Equip with alarms any house exits that lead to a pool, spa, lake or other body of water. If your children try to sneak a swim on their own, you'll hear the alarm and stop them before they can dip a toe in the water.

2. TIDY UP

When toys aren't in use, keep them away from the pool and out of sight. Albeit accidental, your children might go for a swim after a slip on the pool deck while reaching the extra inch for that rubber ducky.

3. FENCE THEM IN - OR RATHER, OUT

Install and use barriers around home pools or hot tubs. *NationalWaterSafetyMonth.org* recommends setting up a fence at least 4 feet tall with self-latching gates.

4. BLOCK ESCAPE ROUTES

Once they get a feel for the fun to be had in the water, they'll want to find a way back for more. Keep lawn chairs and other furniture items away from pool gates so that children can't climb on them to reach the latch or lift themselves over the barrier.

5. BUOYANT IS THE NEW BLACK

From inner tubes to life vests to arm floaties, there are many wardrobe options to keep your kids afloat. If they are still mastering the art of swimming, dress them up in floatable fashion until they are ready. *Note: While boating, children under age 6 are required by law to wear a personal flotation device, and the State of Florida urges ALL passengers to wear life vests.*

6. BRING A BUDDY

NEVER let your children swim alone. No matter how confident you/they are in their skills, there is no telling what unforeseen circumstances could impair their swimming capabilities. Whether they are with you, a babysitter, or another responsible adult, always designate a "watcher" responsible for monitoring the waters.

7. ON GUARD!

No matter how closely you're watching, an extra set of (professionally trained) eyes on your swimming children never hurts. At beaches and public pools, instruct your children to stay within the swim zone that is monitored by a lifeguard.

8. MOUTH-TO-MOUTH

Take the time to learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and require babysitters do the same if you have a pool at home. Several organizations, like the American Red Cross, offer certification courses throughout the year. Although you hope to never need it, CPR is a lesson worth learning.

9. STRIDE OUT OF THE TIDE

When caught in a rip tide, it is easy to panic, which only makes the situation worse. If you teach your children how to escape the current ahead of time, they'll be more likely to keep calm if/when the time comes. *Remember: Swim parallel to the shore instead of against the current. When you're out, swim at an angle toward the shore.*

10. CHECKPOINT #1 - WATER

Water is dangerous territory for the unprepared or ill-equipped, and a child can lose consciousness in only two minutes. If your child ever goes missing - whether you're at your own home, a friend's house, or another location with a pool or body of water nearby - check the water first!



Stay Safe This Summer!
Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

Bob Gualtieri