

## #1: Top Ten Water Safety Rules

Water safety rules—important guidelines to prevent injury around the water—should be a part of every child's safety education and every family's accident prevention plan. This top ten list can get your family prepared for the water long before they ever get wet!

- 1. Swim with a buddy; never swim alone.** Even the strongest swimmers should not swim alone. If something goes wrong, you may need someone to go get help for you.
- 2. Swim in a supervised area.** Areas supervised by lifeguards are generally safe. Lifeguards have a duty to watch over swimmers and help those in need. Even if a lifeguard is not on duty, areas supervised by swim instructors, coaches, or other adults are generally safer than unsupervised areas.
- 3. Make water safety a family matter.** When family members watch over each, layers of protection result. Examples include constant adult supervision, barriers closed and locked by older family members to prevent access to water by younger family members, "arm's reach" supervision in the water, family emergency plans, sibling buddy systems, etc.
- 4. Know your environment, activity, and equipment.** Every safe place to swim, every aquatic activity, and every water sport has rules to follow and risks to avoid. Learn all you can about the water environments, equipment, and activities you and your family like.
- 5. Avoid dangerous waters.** Some examples include swiftly moving water; waves or currents around rocks and debris; water around dams, drainage ditches, quarries, etc.; flood waters; murky waters; etc.
- 6. Avoid dangerous activities.** Some examples include entries from a height (like a bridge, cliff, pier, or roof top); diving through waves and into murky water; hyperventilation and underwater swimming; and horseplay (pushing, shoving, dunking, etc.).
- 7. Always wear a life jacket.** Whenever you find yourself in or around cold water or using recreational aquatic equipment, wear an appropriate U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket. It cannot help you if it is not on you!
- 8. Use a float plan and stay with the boat.** Whenever you go boating, let a friend or loved one know in writing where you are going and when you will return. Call periodically during the trip to let the person know your boat trip is on course and on schedule. If you run into trouble, stay with the boat so you can be located and rescued easily.
- 9. Avoid alcohol and aquatic activities.** Do not drink if you plan to swim, surf, or operate a boat or other recreational aquatic equipment. Being intoxicated or under the influence of drugs can impair your judgment, slow your reaction time, and affect your ability to swim to safety or assist others in the water.
- 10. Protect yourself from the environment.** You and your family need to take particular care if you plan to be out in the sun, in the cold or on the ice, or around moving water or potentially dangerous aquatic/marine life.
  - Use a broad spectrum sunscreen with a sun-protection factor (SPF) of 30 or more. Apply sunscreen before you are in the sun and reapply it often. Protect your eyes with broad spectrum sunglasses and your head with a hat.
  - Wear layers of clothing in the cold that transfer moisture, insulate, and protect against the elements.
  - Know the risks and hazards of each environment and avoid them.