

School Holiday Parent Kit

WATER SAFETY

One of the best ways to keep kids happy and cool on hot summer days is water play. However, even if your children can swim, this activity can be very dangerous and you should always be mindful of safety precautions. The tips in this fact sheet will help you and your children enjoy a water-safe holiday.

POOL SAFETY

- Only allow children near a pool if you are able to stay and supervise. This does not mean reading a book, cooking, chatting with another adult, gardening or hanging out the washing. You should keep your children in constant view, be within arms reach and be appropriately dressed and ready for action in case you have to enter the pool.
- Floating or learn-to-swim devices don't replace your adult supervision. They only make your children feel more confident in the water.
- Educate your children that there must be an adult with them before they can go into the pool area.
- Swimming pools should be surrounded on all sides with a fence that meets Australian Standard AS1926 – and gates should be kept closed.
- Never leave a pool gate propped open. Stress the importance of this to older children and teenagers who may use the pool.
- Make sure gates are self-closing and self latching.
- Remove anything near or leaning against the fence which could be used to climb over it or to reach the latch.
- Spa baths, wading pools, fish ponds and buckets are also potential drowning dangers and similar rules should apply. Ponds should be covered with fixed grilles.
- Make sure that any backyard wading pools, wheelbarrows or other containers are emptied out after rain.
- At social functions designate an adult for pool patrol. If this person needs to leave they should hand this responsibility over to another adult.
- If your house forms one side of the barrier to the pool, then doors and windows leading from the house to the pool should be key locked and unable to be opened by more than 100mm.
- Check safety barriers regularly.
- Keep rescue equipment by the pool.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) – it can save lives.
- Don't leave pool toys and floats in the pool or pool area that may attract young children to the water.
- Steps and ladders to above ground pools should be secured and locked. Alternatively, remove them when the pool is not in use.
- If a child is missing, always look in the pool first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- To prevent body entrapment and hair entanglement, have a qualified pool professional inspect the drain suction fittings and covers on your pool and spa. They will make sure they are the proper size, correctly attached and meet current safety standards.
- If your pool or spa has a single drain outlet, consider installing a safety vacuum release system that breaks the vacuum to avoid potential entrapment conditions.
- Instruct babysitters about the potential pool hazards that are in your backyard. Make sure they understand the need for constant supervision.
- Even if your children know how to swim, supervision is still essential. This is because children may panic or forget their swimming skills in an emergency or unfamiliar environment.
- If you have an inflatable pool, empty it when you are no longer prepared to supervise your children. Store it away from your children's reach.
- If you own a swimming pool that is more than 15 years old with a potty-style skimmer box (so-called as it resembles a child's chamber pot) you should ensure that the skimmer box lid is fitted so it can't be removed. It should be securely attached by being glued or screwed in place. Swimming pool outlets that are potty skimmer boxes must meet certain performance criteria and other requirements for standard skimmer boxes in Australian Standard 1926.3 – 2003.

Further advice about pool safety is available from your local council.

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REMEMBER

'Slip, Slop, Slap'

DEADLY DISTRACTIONS

- Do not let yourself be distracted from supervising water activities. Don't run to the telephone. Let it ring or turn on an answering machine.
- If you have to leave the pool area (eg. to tend to another child or a pet) ensure there is another adult to stay and supervise, otherwise take the children with you.

WHEN YOU VISIT OR IF YOU HAVE GUESTS

Make sure you find out what hazards are present – many children have drowned at friends' homes because their parents didn't know there was a pool or spa in the back yard. Likewise, if you have visitors with children, let them know of potential hazards.

DAMS, CREEKS, RIVERS AND LAKES

If you are on a rural property or visiting a recreational area don't forget about the dangers posed by dams, creeks, rivers and lakes.

Drowning is the most common cause of death to children on farms. Children under five are at greatest risk – the most common scenario being that a child wanders away from supervision unnoticed, into a dam or creek.

An important way to prevent toddler drowning on farms is to have a safe play area for young children to play – such as a securely fenced house yard.

If children are going to swim in dams, creeks, rivers or lakes, make sure there is always an adult supervising, just like with a pool. It is important for families to familiarise themselves with any of these waters because, unlike the pool, conditions are very changeable.

Young children should be supervised within an 'arms length'. The murkiness of natural waterways can mean that once submerged, a toddler can be 'out of sight' immediately. A bright t-shirt can help with visibility.

Make sure hazards such as depth, flow/currents, steep/crumbly/slippery banks, submerged objects and reeds are identified and precautions taken. Rules such as no diving and out-of-bounds areas may be necessary.

For more information about child safety on farms, check out the Safety on the Farm fact sheet in this series or go to www.farmsafe.org.au

LEARN RESUSCITATION

Classes are available from the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia.

Telephone: (02) 9634 3700

Website: www.nsw.royallifesaving.com.au

AT THE BEACH

If you are lucky enough to live near the beach, or are visiting the beach on holidays, make sure you follow these tips from Surf Life Saving Australia.

- Find the flags and swim between them – they mark the safest place to swim at the beach.
- Look at the safety signs – they help you identify potential dangers and daily conditions at the beach.
- Ask a lifesaver for some good advice – surf conditions can change quickly, so always check before you or your children enter the water.
- Get a friend to swim with you – you should never swim alone and you should always supervise your children when they are in the water.
- Stick your hand up for help – if you get into trouble in the water, stay calm and raise your arm to signal for assistance. Don't try to swim against a current or rip, but float with it.

For more information on beach safety, visit the Surf Life Saving Australia website at: www.slsa.asn.au

TIP

Just because school's out it doesn't mean it's time to stop learning - organise for your children to learn to swim.

SWIMMING CLASSES: A LIFE LONG INVESTMENT

Using nationally qualified instructors, NSW Sport and Recreation offers affordable Swimsafe learn-to-swim classes that promote safety in and around the water.

Telephone 13 13 02 for details or visit the website at www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSSA) also endorses the Swim and Survive learn-to-swim program which includes water safety and survival skills. For information on where these courses are held contact the RLSSA on (02) 9634 3700 or these websites: www.nsw.royallifesaving.com.au www.swimandsurvive.com

REMEMBER

Swim between the F.L.A.G.S and stay safe this summer.

Community Services thanks these organisations for their contribution to this fact sheet and invites you to visit their websites for more information.



Communities
Sport & Recreation

www.dsr.nsw.gov.au



www.royallifesaving.com.au



www.farmsafe.org.au



www.kidsafensw.org



www.slsa.com.au



www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au