

Swimming Safety

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As the weather becomes warmer, reports of accidental drowning become all too common. Drowning victims encompass all age groups- the toddler who fell into the family pool, the teenager who dove into a lake and struck an unseen rock, the adult who was pulled out to sea by a vicious undertow. Perhaps the saddest fact about each of these cases is that the drowning accident could have been prevented. Learn these basic rules for drown-proofing your family, before an accident becomes a tragedy.

Pool Safety

If you own a backyard pool, or live in an area where pools are common, enroll your children in swimming classes immediately (infants as young as a few months old can learn to swim their way to safety). Invest in an approved safety cover and keep the pool covered whenever it is not in use. Fence in your pool to prevent curious youngsters from entering the pool area without your permission. Never allow toddlers or young children access to the pool without adult supervision.

Diving Safety

Diving into shallow water, or striking an unseen obstacle can lead to unconsciousness, spinal cord injury, and all too often, death. Always test water depth before diving, and if you are unable to see below the water's surface, don't dive. Even if you are sure your path is clear, keep your arms extended above your head when diving. Your hands (not your head) will hit an unseen obstacle first.

Swimming Safety

Whenever you swim (in a pool, lake, or ocean), always have a partner nearby. Observe warning signs- "No lifeguard on duty", "Dangerous undertow," etc. Never swim when you are tired, under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications, or when weather conditions are stormy. If you are not an experienced swimmer, stay in shallow water and use flotation devices. Never allow toddlers or young children to swim without adult supervision.

Additional Tips

Certain water sports such as boating, water skiing, and surfing, pose special drowning dangers. If you are interested in taking up any water sport, learn how to swim beforehand. Know nautical rules and regulations before going on any boat. Always keep approved flotation devices readily available. Check your equipment before engaging in any water sport to be sure it is in good operating condition. Finally, use your common sense and avoid unnecessary risks. Drowning accidents are tragedies that can, in most cases, be prevented.

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program, 1.800.995.8503.

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