

Whether you are in the bathroom, outside by the pool, at home, visiting a friend or relative, or down at the beach, it is always important to remember to Play it Safe by the Water with children.

Drowning is one of the major causes of unintentional death for Australian Children. The home environment is the most common location for toddler drowning, with backyard pools and bathtubs involved in a large number of incidents.

Non fatal drowning incidents are also of great concern as they can have potential long term effects including brain damage, and permanent disability.

Why children are at risk?

Children like to explore their environments; they are naturally attracted to water and have little fear or understanding of the dangers that it poses.

Drowning often happens quickly and silently; 20 seconds is all it takes for a toddler to drown. Therefore, children need to be constantly supervised around water at all times by an adult.

Children can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water, meaning that toddler pools, backyard ponds, nappy buckets, bathtubs, buckets of water and even pets drinking bowls must be recognised as potential drowning hazards, as well as larger bodies of water such as pools and spas.

Prevention:

Kidsafe recommends that parents and carers take the following precautions to reduce the risk of childhood drowning:

Supervise:

- Never take your eyes off children around water
- Active Supervision involves parents and carers keeping an eye on children at all times. Do not expect older children to look after their younger siblings. Children have short attention spans and can be easily distracted.
- Remain within arms reach. This will ensure that you can get to the child in time if something does go wrong.
- Take children with you if you leave the water area.

Reduce the Hazard:

- Restrict children's access to water through safety barriers such as pool fencing.
- Remove hazards such as pot plants and chairs well away from pool fences to avoid children climbing on to them and over the fence.
- Do not prop any doors or gates open that allow children access to a body of water.

- Create a safe play area to separate your child from bodies of water such as swimming pools and dams. This is especially important on farms and larger properties.

Knowledge

- Water familiarisation lessons can assist in teaching children to swim while also helping them understand water safety.
- Enrol in a resuscitation course and update skills annually so you are able to respond in case of an emergency.
- Resuscitation posters are a good reminder to keep around pools and spas.

Regular inspection and maintenance of your pool fence, including the gate, is essential to ensure that it is in proper working order. You can download Royal Life Saving's Home Pool Safety Checklist via: www.kidsafevic.com.au/media/Water-Safety-Checklist.pdf Please conduct this annually as weather conditions and general wear and tear can affect your pool safety barrier.

