

General Water Safety Tips

- Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. Always swim with a buddy; never swim alone. The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability. To enroll in a swim course, contact your [local Red Cross chapter](#).
- Swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard.
- Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
- Children or inexperienced swimmers should take precautions, such as wearing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) when around the water.
- Watch out for the dangerous “too’s” – too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.
- Set water safety rules for the whole family based on swimming abilities (for example, inexperienced swimmers should stay in water less than chest deep).
- Be knowledgeable of the water environment you are in and its potential hazards, such as deep and shallow areas, currents, depth changes, obstructions and where the entry and exit points are located. The more informed you are, the more aware you will be of hazards and safe practices.
- Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather.
- Use a feet-first entry when entering the water.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstructions.
- Do not mix alcohol with swimming, diving or boating. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body’s ability to stay warm.
- Know how to prevent, recognize, and respond to emergencies.

Keeping Children Safe In, On, and Around the Water

- Maintain constant supervision. Watch children around any water environment (pool, stream, lake, tub, toilet, bucket of water), no matter what skills your child has acquired and no matter how shallow the water. For younger children, practice "Reach Supervision" by staying within an arm's length reach.
- Don't rely on substitutes. The use of flotation devices and inflatable toys **cannot** replace parental supervision. Such devices could suddenly shift position, lose air, or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.
- Enroll children in a water safety course or [Learn-to-Swim classes](#). Your decision to provide your child with an early aquatic experience is a gift that will have infinite rewards. These courses encourage safe practices. You can also purchase a [Water Safety Handbook](#) at the Red Cross Store.
- Parents should take a CPR course. Knowing these skills can be important around the water and you will expand your capabilities in providing care for your child. You can contact your [local Red Cross](#) to enroll in a [CPR course](#).

Home Pools

- Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim--this includes adults and children. The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability. To enroll in a course to learn or improve your ability to swim, contact your [local Red Cross chapter](#).
- Never leave a child unobserved around water. Your eyes must be on the child at all times. Adult supervision is recommended.
- Install a phone by the pool or keep a cordless phone nearby so that you can call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- Learn Red Cross CPR and insist that babysitters, grandparents, and others who care for your child know CPR.
- Post CPR instructions and 9-1-1 or your local emergency number in the pool area.
- Enclose the pool completely with a self-locking, self-closing fence with vertical bars. Openings in the fence should be no more than four inches wide. The house should not be included as a part of the barrier.
 - The gate should be constructed so that it is self-latching and self-closing.
- Never leave furniture near the fence that would enable a child to climb over the fence.
- Always keep basic lifesaving equipment by the pool and know how to use it. Pole, rope, and personal flotation devices (PFDs) are recommended.
- Keep toys away from the pool when it is not in use. Toys can attract young children into the pool.
- Pool covers should always be completely removed prior to pool use.
- If a child is missing, check the pool first. Go to the edge of the pool and scan the entire pool, bottom, and surface, as well as the surrounding pool area

Beach Safety

- Protect your skin: Sunlight contains two kinds of UV rays -- UVA increases the risk of skin cancer, skin aging, and other skin diseases. UVB causes sunburn and can lead to skin cancer. Limit the amount of direct sunlight you receive between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and wear a sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 15.
- Drink plenty of water regularly and often even if you do not feel thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool.
 - Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them. They can make you feel good briefly but make the heat's effects on your body worse. This is especially true with beer, which dehydrates the body.
- Watch for signs of heat stroke: Heat stroke is life-threatening. The person's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working.
 - The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.
 - Signals of heat stroke include –
 - Hot, red, and usually dry skin, but in some cases such as during athletic activity while wearing a helmet, the skin may be moist
 - Changes in consciousness
 - Rapid, weak pulse, and
 - Rapid, shallow breathing.
 - Call 9-1-1 or your local EMS number.
 - Move the person to a cooler place.
 - Quickly cool the body by wrapping wet sheets around the body and fan it. If you have ice packs or cold packs, place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels.
 - Watch for signals of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear.
 - Keep the person lying down.
- Wear eye protection
 - Sunglasses are like sunscreen for your eyes and protect against damage that can occur from UV rays.
 - Be sure to wear sunglasses with labels that indicate that they absorb at least 90 percent of UV sunlight.
- Wear foot protection. Many times, people's feet can get burned from the sand or cut from glass in the sand.