

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 and the YMCA have swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability. To enroll in a swim course, contact your local Red Cross chapter or nearest YMCA.
- Swim in supervised areas only.
- Obey all rules and posted signs.
- Avoid becoming too tired, too cold, too far from safety, as well as getting too much sun, too much strenuous activity.
- Don't mix alcohol and swimming. Alcohol impairs your judgement, balance, and coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body's ability to stay warm.
- Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather.
- Know how to prevent, recognize, and respond to emergencies.

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 (SPF) 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 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 victim'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 include hot, red, and dry skin, changes in consciousness, rapid, weak pulse, and rapid, shallow breathing. Call 9-1-1 at the first signs of heat stroke. 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 signs of breathing problems. 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.

Boating

- Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. This includes anyone participating in any boating activity.
- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination - over 50 percent of drownings result from boating incidents involving alcohol.
- Use Coast Guard-approved life jackets for yourself and your passengers when boating and fishing.
- Anytime you go out in a boat, leave details about where you will be and how long you will be gone with a responsible person. If the boat is delayed because of an emergency, becomes lost, or encounters other problems, you want help to be able to reach you.
- Find a boating course in your area (Red Cross: U.S. Power Squadron, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, US Sailing, etc) -- these courses teach about navigation rules, emergency procedures and the effects of wind, water conditions, and weather.
- Watch the weather: Know local weather conditions and prepare for electrical storms. Stop boating as soon as you see or hear a storm.

Home Pools

- Learn to swim.
- 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 CPR and insist that those who care for your child know CPR.
- Post CPR instructions and 9-1-1 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. If the house is part of the barrier, the doors leading from the house to the pool should remain locked and be protected with an alarm that produces sounds when the door is unexpectedly opened.
- 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, they 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.

Keeping Children Safe In, On, and Around the Water

- Maintain constant supervision. Watch children around any water environment (pool, stream, lake, tub, toilet, and bucket of water), no matter what skills your child has acquired and no matter how shallow the water.
- 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” program. Your decision to provide your child with an early aquatic experience is a gift that will have infinite rewards. These courses encourage safe practices.
- 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.

Lakes and Rivers

- Learn to swim.
- Select a supervised area. A trained lifeguard who can help in an emergency is the best safety factor. Even good swimmers can have an unexpected medical emergency in the water. Never swim alone.
- Select an area that is clean and well maintained this is an indication of the management's concern for your health and safety.
- Select an area that has good water quality and safe natural conditions. Murky water, hidden underwater objects, unexpected drop-offs, and aquatic plant life are hazards. Water pollution can cause health problems for swimmers. Strong tides, big waves, and currents can turn a fun event into a tragedy.
- Make sure the water is deep enough before entering headfirst. Too many swimmers are seriously injured every year by entering headfirst into water that is too shallow. A feet-first entry is much safer than diving.
- Be sure that rafts and docks are in good condition. A well-run open-water facility maintains its rafts and docks in good condition, with no loose boards or exposed nails. Never swim under a raft or dock. Always look before jumping off a dock or raft to be sure no one is in the way.
- Avoid drainage ditches and arroyos. Drainage ditches and arroyos for water run-off are not good places for swimming or playing in the water. After heavy rains, they can quickly

change into raging rivers that can easily take a human life. Even the strongest swimmers are no match for the power of the water. Fast water and debris in the current make ditches and arroyos very dangerous.

Ocean Safety

- Learn to swim.
- Stay within the designated swimming area, ideally within the visibility of a lifeguard.
- Never swim alone.
- Check the surf conditions before you enter the water. Check to see if a warning flag is up or check with a lifeguard for water conditions, beach conditions, or any potential hazards.
- Stay away from piers, pilings, and diving platforms when in the water.
- Keep a lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals may be dangerous. Avoid patches of plants. Leave animals alone.
- Make sure you always have enough energy to swim back to shore.
- Don't try to swim against a current if caught in one. Swim gradually out of the current, by swimming across it.

Personal Watercraft (Jet Skis)

- Learn to swim.
- Know your local laws and regulations. Some states have special laws governing the use of personal water craft (PWC) which address operations, registration and licensing requirements, education, required safety equipment and minimum ages.
- Operate your PWC with courtesy and common sense. Follow the traffic pattern of the waterway. Obey no-wake and speed zones.
- Use extreme caution around swimmers and surfers. Run your PWC at a slow speed until the raft is away from shore, swimming areas, and docks.
- Avoid passing close to other boats and jumping wakes. This behavior is dangerous and often illegal.
- Coast Guard-approved life jackets should be worn by the operator of the PWC, as well as any riders.
- Ride with a buddy. PWCs should always travel in groups of two or three. You never know when an emergency might occur.
- Alcohol and operating a PWC doesn't mix. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination.

Sailboarding and Windsurfing

- Always wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- Wear a wet suit in cold water to prevent hypothermia.
- You need good physical strength and swimming ability.
- Take windsurfing lessons from a qualified instructor.
- Know local weather conditions. Make sure the water and weather conditions are safe because water conducts electricity, it is wise to stop swimming, boating or any activities on the water as soon as you see or hear a storm. Also, heavy rains can make certain areas dangerous.

Skin and SCUBA Diving

- Learn to swim.
- Receive instructions/take lessons from qualified divers before participating.
- Get a medical examination and take a swim test before learning SCUBA diving.
- Once certified, do not dive in rough or dangerous waters or in environments for which you are not trained. Ice, cave, and shipwreck diving require special training. One can easily get lost or trapped and run out of air.
- Never dive by yourself.
- Know local weather conditions. Make sure the water and weather conditions are safe because water conducts electricity, it is wise to stop swimming, boating or any activities on the water as soon as you see or hear a storm. Also, heavy rains can make certain areas dangerous.

Snorkeling

- Learn to swim.
- Practice in shallow water.
- Check the equipment carefully and know how it functions.
- Learn how to clear water from the snorkel.
- Learn how to put your mask back on when you tread water.
- Be careful not to swim or be carried by a current too far from shore or the boat.
- Never snorkel alone.
- Know local weather conditions. Make sure the water and weather conditions are safe because water conducts electricity, it is wise to stop swimming, boating or any activities on the water as soon as you see or hear a storm. Also, heavy rains can make certain areas dangerous.

Surfing

- Learn to swim.
- Take lessons from an experienced individual.
- Wear a wet suit when in cold water.
- Never surf alone.
- Know local weather conditions. Make sure the water and weather conditions are safe because water conducts electricity, it is wise to stop swimming, boating or any activities on the water as soon as you see or hear a storm. Also, heavy rains can make certain areas dangerous.

Tubing and Rafting

- Learn to swim.
- Always wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- Do not overload the raft.
- Do not go rafting after a heavy rain.
- When rafting with a tour company, make sure the guides are qualified. Check with the local chamber of commerce for listings of accredited tour guides and companies.
- Know local weather conditions. Make sure the water and weather conditions are safe because water conducts electricity, it is wise to stop swimming, boating, or any activities on the water as soon as you see or hear a storm. Also, heavy rains can make certain areas dangerous.

Waterparks

- Learn to swim.
- Be sure the area is well supervised by lifeguards before entering the water.
- Read all posted signs. Follow the rules and directions given by lifeguards. Ask questions if you are not sure about a correct procedure.
- When you go from one attraction to another, note that the water depth may be different and that the attraction should be used in a different way.
- Before you start down a water slide, get in the correct position -- face up and feet first.
- Some facilities provide life jackets at no charge. If you cannot swim, wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket. Check others in your group as well.

Water Skiing

- Learn to swim.
- Wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.

- Be sure the boat and ski equipment are in good shape.
- Always turn the boat motor completely off when you approach a fallen skier.
- Watch the water ahead of you at all times.
- Have an extra person aboard to watch and assist the skier.
- Run parallel to shore and come in slowly when landing. Sit down if coming in too fast.
- Use proper hand signals to signal boat operator.
- Do not ski at night or in restricted areas.
- Know local weather conditions. Make sure the water and weather conditions are safe because water conducts electricity, it is wise to stop swimming, boating or any activities on the water as soon as you see or hear a storm. Also, heavy rains can make certain areas dangerous.