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Pool Season! Keep Your Child Safe by the Water

by Sue Douglass Fliess

As it heats up outside, one of the best ways to keep cool is a dip in the pool. And while the pool or beach can be buckets of fun, you should review some simple water safety rules with your child before going swimming – whether it's in a public pool, the ocean, or the kiddie-pool in your backyard – these guidelines can save lives.



Here are some safety tips for parents:

- First things first, don't forget the sunscreen! SPF 45 for the kiddies, please. And be aware that even though the bottle says waterproof, sunscreen *will* eventually wash off. You may have to apply it several times throughout the day.
- Supervise your child at all times. If your child is older, make sure she knows she is never to swim alone. Even an experienced swimmer can run into trouble.
- The pool fence should always be up and the gate closed after every entry or exit.
- Bring the phone outside with you –for emergency phone calls only. For the sake of courtesy and uninterrupted family time, let incoming phone calls go to the answering machine.
- Never leave the pool to answer the door, phone, check on dinner, change the baby, etc. If you must, be prepared to get your child out of the pool to do so.
- Be sure the drain cover is securely fastened. If it's loose, turn off the pump until it can be repaired.
- If by chance a child gets her hair caught in the drain, *do not* try to pull her out until the pool pump has been shut off.
- Have a shepherd's hook at the ready. This instrument is used to pull people out of the pool.
- Make sure the water level of the pool is a few inches below the edge. It will be easier for a child to grab the edge.
- When in a new pool, be sure to introduce your child to the steps.
- If you have a pool in your backyard, be sure that the doors from the house to the backyard can be secured and locks are out of the child's reach.

Here are some key safety rules your child should know. Teach your child to:

- Turn, kick and reach. If your child falls into the pool, he can get himself out by turning to face the

side of the pool, kicking his legs to get there, and reaching for the side to hoist himself out.

- Be careful when jumping in. Be sure there is no one in the way – pick an open spot, and make sure that the water is deep enough.
- Always walk; never run around the pool.
- Never engage in rough play in the pool.
- Put away all the pool toys. A very young child may see a toy in a pool, try to reach it and fall in.
- Never push another person into the pool – as funny as he thinks that may be. That person may not have a chance to catch a breath and may swallow water.

Swimming is a great activity the whole family can enjoy. If you follow these basic precautions, you can remove the worry and have a pleasant time at the pool this summer.

**Tips are from Baby Otter Swim School, Inc.*

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