



Practice water safety to prepare for summer fun

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Swimming is a fun, relaxing activity that fuels kids' brain health and builds strong bodies. Learning to move in the water also improves coordination and flexibility.

However, it is important to prepare to be safe in and around the water. Drowning is the No. 1 cause of death among children ages 1 to 4 years, and kids can drown in seconds.

Research shows that teaching children to swim early in life is one way to avoid tragedies around water.

Many children can start swim lessons as early as 12 months. Since children develop at different rates, talk with your pediatrician about whether your child is physically and emotionally ready to learn to swim.

By age 4, nearly all children are ready for classes that help them build confidence and water safety skills. They will learn to float, tread water and find an exit point. By age 5 or 6, most can master basic swim strokes like the front crawl.

Swimming also can be beneficial for kids with special needs. As they gain skill and confidence moving in the water, they may achieve better coordination, balance, muscle tone and stress relief.

To prevent drowning and other serious water-related injuries, the American Red Cross says people of all ages should be able to:

- step or jump into water that goes above their head,
- come back to the surface and float or tread water,
- turn around in a full circle and find a way out of the water,
- swim at least 25 yards to the exit point, and

- climb out without help, even if there is no ladder.

Good swimming skills open healthy social opportunities for your child. They will feel confident going to poolside parties, beach outings and waterside vacations with family and friends. Even if they never join the swim team, spending time in the water can help build the stamina and strength needed for other sports. Swimming also can help your child deal with everyday stress.

More information about child water safety is available at HealthyChildren.org at <https://bit.ly/4dpnsR0>.

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