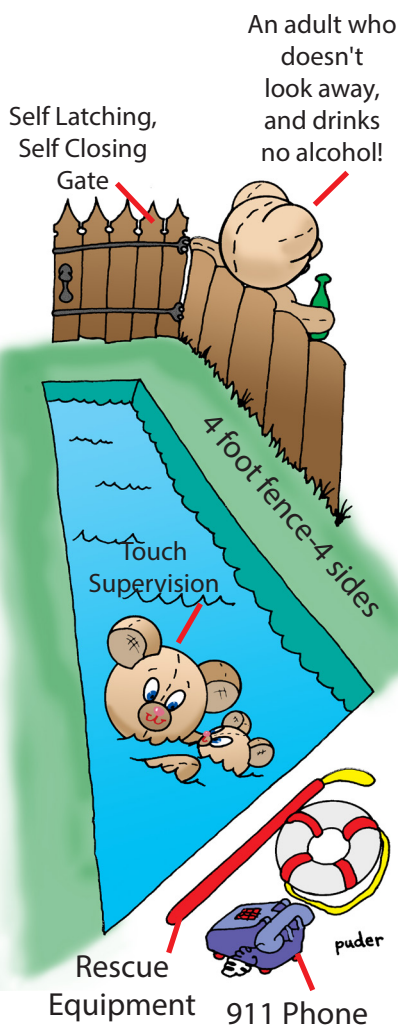
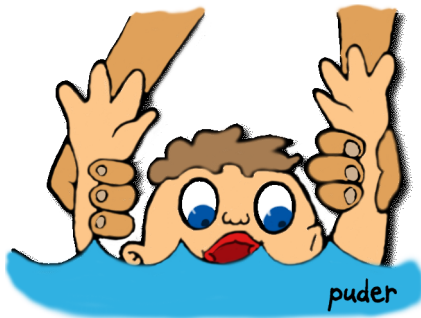




# Drowning Prevention:

Advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics

by Doug Puder, MD



Drowning continues to be the second leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 19, claiming the lives of roughly 1,100 children per year. Toddlers and teenaged boys are at greatest risk.

Children need to learn to swim, but even advanced swimming skills cannot 'drown-proof' a child of any age. Parents must closely supervise their children around water and know how to perform CPR.

Most children age 4 and older should learn to swim, but the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) is now more open toward swim classes for younger children. In the past, swim lessons for children ages 1 to 3 were discouraged because there was no evidence they prevented drowning or resulted in better swim skills. There was a concern parents would become less careful about watching their child in a pool. But new studies show that children ages 1 to 4 may be less likely to drown if they have had formal swimming instruction. The studies are small, and don't define what type of lessons work best.

The AAP is not recommending swim lessons for all children ages 1 to 4 at this time. Consider swim lessons for children aged 1-4 if they have frequent exposure to water, good emotional development and physical ability, and no health concerns related to pool water infections or pool chemicals.

Despite any lessons, **never**, even for a moment, leave small children alone or in the care of another young child while in bathtubs, pools, spas, wading pools, or standing water. Bath seats cannot substitute for adult supervision. Empty water from buckets and other containers immediately after use. To prevent drowning in toilets, young children should not be left alone in the bathroom.

Closely supervise children in and around water. With infants, toddlers and weak swimmers, an adult should be within an arm's length. With older children and better swimmers, an adult should be focused on the child and not distracted by other activities (phones, laptops, alcohol). Assign a "lifeguard" adult at pool parties.

Your child's risk of drowning is cut in half if you install a fence which completely surrounds your pool (all four sides and isolated from the house) It should be at least 4 feet high, hard to climb (not chain-link) and have a self-latching, self-closing gate. Avoid having anything alongside the fence, such as lawn furniture, that can be used to climb it. Pool alarms and rigid pool covers offer additional layers of protection, but do not take the place of a fence. Keep a



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phone near you so you can call 911 in an emergency.

Unfortunately, laws regarding pool fencing may have dangerous loopholes. Some large, inflatable above-ground pools are considered "portable," and can be exempt from local codes requiring pool fencing. Install a fence regardless of local pool codes!

Do not use air-filled swimming aids (such as inflatable arm bands) in place of life jackets. They can deflate and are not designed to keep swimmers safe.

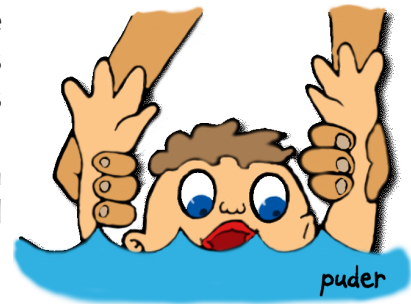
All children should wear a life jacket when riding in a boat. Small children and nonswimmers should also wear one at water's edge, such as on a riverbank or pier.

Parents should know the depth of the water and any underwater hazards before allowing children to jump in. The first time you enter the water, jump feet first. Don't dive!

When choosing an open body of water for children to swim in, select a site with lifeguards.

Older swimmers should know what to do in case of rip currents. They should swim parallel to the shore until out of the current, then swim back to the shore. Counsel teenagers about the increased risk of drowning when alcohol is involved.

Drowning people cannot wave or call out for help, so watch swimmers closely. With this advice, we hope you enjoy the water safely this summer!



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