

facts on

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Drowning Prevention

Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death for children aged 0-4 and the second leading cause of injury-related death for children aged 5-9 in Saskatchewan. Drowning results in up to 30% of deaths due to injury for children aged 0-9 in Saskatchewan.

In Canada, 35% of drowning incidents occur in the child's home. 39% of drowning incidents in the home occur in the bathroom.

Children can drown in less than 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water. Children are not able to understand the danger of water and may overestimate their own skills around water.

Take a First Aid and CPR course so you know what to do in the event of an emergency, and remember ... nothing replaces constant supervision of your children.

At Home Tips

- Children under five years of age need constant supervision in or near water. Never leave a child unattended or in the care of an older child while in the bath. If you have to leave the room, even for a moment, take your child with you.
- Drain the water after a bath and make sure no standing water is left in the bathtub.
- Bath rings or bath seats are not recommended for use in Canada as they have been related to drowning incidents in children aged 0 – 24 months.
- Leave toilet seats down when they are not in use.
- Place pet water dishes out of reach of infants and children.



In The Yard

- Keep buckets and garbage cans covered or overturned to prevent water from pooling in them.
- Empty paddling or wading pools when they are not being directly supervised by an adult (within an arm's reach of children under 5 years of age).
- A fence that is a minimum of 1.2 m (4 ft.) high should surround backyard pools and hot tubs on all sides. Fences should have a gate that opens away from the pool with a self-closing and self-latching lock on the inside. Check your local municipal regulations.
- Do not leave chairs, tables or children's play equipment near the fence surrounding a pool as a child could use them to climb over the fence.
- Teach children that the pool and hot tub are off limits without direct adult supervision.
- Decorative ponds and fish ponds should be fenced, following the same guidelines as for a pool.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

Use a PFD that is approved by Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, or Fisheries and Oceans Canada to ensure it meets safety standards.

- **Children 0-5:** PFDs must be worn when playing in shallow water, near beaches, on docks, near pools, in boats or on inner tubes. There are no PFDs approved in Canada for infants who weigh less than 9 kg (20 lbs.).
- **Children 6-11:** PFDs must be worn around or in deep water, on docks, in boats or on inner tubes or knee boards.
- **Teens and Adults:** PFDs must be worn on boats and while using inner tubes, knee boards, water skis, wakeboards or any personal watercraft.
- Ensure the PFD is the right size for your child's size and weight. Do not buy a PFD that is too large in the hope that your child will 'grow into it'. A PFD should fit snugly and not ride up over your child's chin or ears. If there is a space bigger than 7.6 cm (3 in.) between the PFD and your child's shoulders when you pull up on the PFD, it is too big for your child.
- Teach your child that a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) must be worn at all times in or around water.
- Be a role model as a parent. If you want your child to wear a life jacket, especially as they grow older, you must always wear one yourself.
- Infants who cannot sit unsupported or are too small to wear a PFD

should be held by an adult at all times when in or near water.



Never use water toys or water wings as a substitute for PFDs.

- A PFD does not replace adult supervision. Never leave your child unattended in or near water.

At the Pool, Lake & Beach

Children under five years of age or children who are weak swimmers need constant supervision in or near water. Stay within an arm's reach of your child at all times. Never leave a young child under the supervision of an older child.

At social gatherings take turns being the adult responsible for supervision of children. As a designated supervisor, ensure you are not distracted by activities on dry-land such as phone calls or barbecuing/cooking food.

Teach your child to never dive headfirst into water where the depth is unknown. Head, spinal injury, or death can result from diving in headfirst into shallow water. Teach your child to wade, jump feet first or lower into the water when he/she is unsure of water depth.



Teach your child habits such as:

- No running or pushing on pool decks or docks
- Never swim alone - always use the buddy system
- Never enter the water without adult supervision

In a Watercraft

- Watercrafts include commercial boats such as cruise ships and ferries as well as personal watercrafts such as motor boats, canoes and paddle boats.
- Ensure your child always wears a PFD when in a boat. Wearing a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) that is properly fastened is the only way to ensure safety. PFDs do not work if your child and you are not wearing them.
- Children less than 9 kg (20 lbs.) should not be on a boat or taken boating.
- Boating courses are now mandatory.

To help keep your family safe:

- Take a boat safety course.
- Ensure the boat is in good repair and all appropriate safety equipment is on board as required by the boat type and length.
- Check weather before leaving and head back to shore before weather conditions become bad.

Learn To Swim

- Enroll your child in swimming lessons to ensure he/she is comfortable and skilled in and around water.
- Choose a certified swimming program that emphasizes water safety and allows your child to improve swimming skills each year.
- Remember that swimming lessons do not "drown proof" your child. In the event of an emergency your child can forget how to swim or be injured and unable to swim.

Information for this fact sheet was adapted from:

Canadian Paediatric Society Injury Prevention Committee. *Swimming lessons and water safety for young children.* August 2007. <http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/index.htm>

Canadian Red Cross. *Life jackets and personal flotation devices (PFDs).* June 29, 2007. <http://www.croixrouge.ca/article.asp?id=15198&tid=024>

Transport Canada. *A few words on lifejackets and personal flotation devices in Canada.* January 18, 2010. http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-equipment-lifejackets-few_words-1179.htm

Transport Canada. *Information about Lifejackets and PFDs from the Safe Boating Guide.* January 18, 2010. <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-equipment-lifejackets-information-1324.htm#lj1>

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