



Fact Sheet

Stay within arm's reach – prevent drowning

You may be tempted at the pool or river to put your children's water wings on them and let them go play while you relax in a deck chair or catch up on social media. Don't do it! Young children can drown in less than two inches of water. Nearly 1,000 kids drown every year. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death for children 1 to 4 years old, and the second leading cause for kids under age 14.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says a lack of close supervision is one of the main factors leading to children drowning. They urge parents to constantly supervise children, even if the child knows how to swim.

Water wings and inflatable devices are not effective at preventing children from drowning. Parents should choose a properly fitting Coast Guard-approved life jacket that fits the child snugly and matches their weight and size. Life jackets that have a strap between the legs and a head collar should be used for children younger than 5 years old. However, a life jacket should never replace adult supervision.

Young children are especially at risk, since they can drown even in shallow water. Evidence from the CDC shows that swimming lessons and the use of life jackets can greatly reduce a child's risk of drowning, but constant adult supervision is still vital. Parents should stay within at least an arm's reach of young children and weak swimmers in order to provide 'touch supervision'.

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