

12 Things Parents of Children with Autism Need to Know About Drowning Prevention

1. Kids with autism are **DRAWN** to water. They love the way it shimmers, bubbles, and feels on the skin. That, paired with a lack of danger awareness, can easily lead to a lethal combination.

2. The drowning rate in those with ASD is 160 times greater than those who are typically developing. 48% wander from parents and safe adults. 74% of drowning is a result of wandering.

3. Never leave a child unattended, no matter how much you think they won't jump into the water on their own or seek out a neighbor's pool.

4. Be sure that your child gets swimming lessons. This is of utmost importance. Don't assume that they cannot learn to swim. Many kids with autism are incredible swimmers, after they are taught.

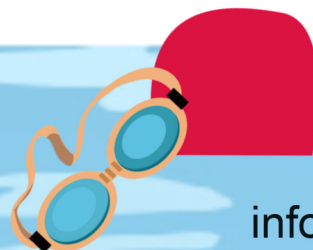


5. When using flotation devices use **CAUTION**. If children get accustomed to having one on, they may always think they will float.

6. People with autism often have poor generalization skills. They may exhibit swimming skills in one pool, but not in another. Have your child spend time in different swimming environments to be certain that they have enough skills to stay alive in the water.



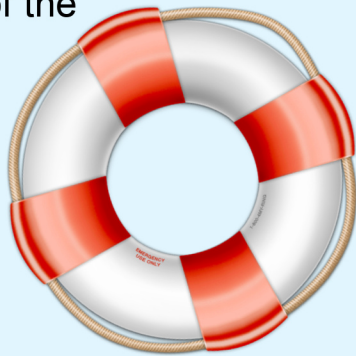
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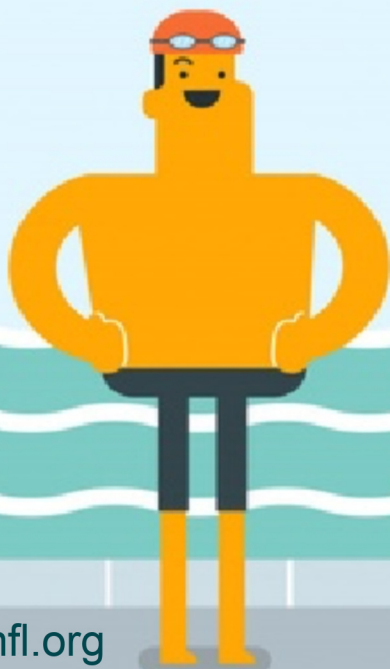
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7. Knowing that 76% of all children who drown are age 3 and under, we must be diligent in keeping doors locked, pools gated and locked, alarms on doors and NEVER assume that a child cannot get out of the house.

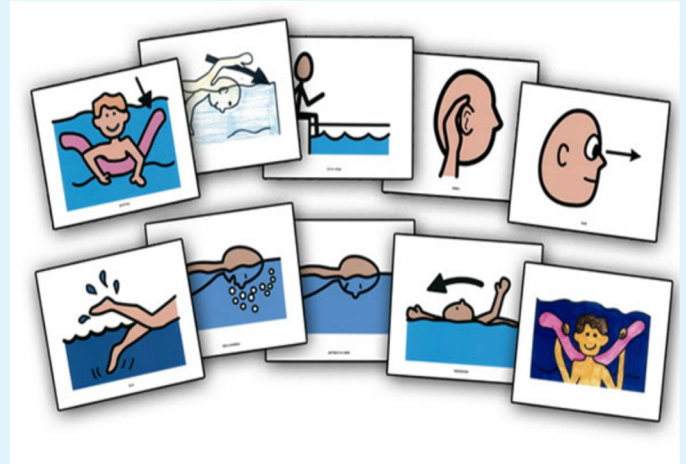
8. When beginning the swimming lesson process, prepare students for the loud sound of the lifeguards' whistles. Demonstrate them and explain why they are used, and allow them to blow the whistle.



9. Allow your child time to familiarize themselves with the pool, the instructor, and objects they will be using, like their kickboards, goggles, or fins. This helps to minimize social difficulties and discomfort that a child with autism might experience.



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10. Ask your swim school if they can offer a 'quiet room' or space. It doesn't need to be an actual room, but this would be an area away from the noise and activities where your child can go if they need a quiet break.

11. If your child has a hard time with crowds, ask the school if they can adjust the student-teacher ratio at "off" times. Many students with ASD perform better in smaller classes. Also, ask for flexibility with standard requirements, such as wearing swimming caps, which lots of kids with ASD can't handle.

12. Prepare laminated visuals of swimming lesson expectations, pool rules and rewards. Develop social stories about what kids can expect when they begin swimming lessons. Using individual pictures of your child and his/her teacher would be great and more meaningful.



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