

WATER SMART KIDS

THE PARENT'S GUIDE TO PREVENTING DROWNING



**DROWNING DOESN'T CARE ABOUT AGE. WATER SAFETY MATTERS
AT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE.**

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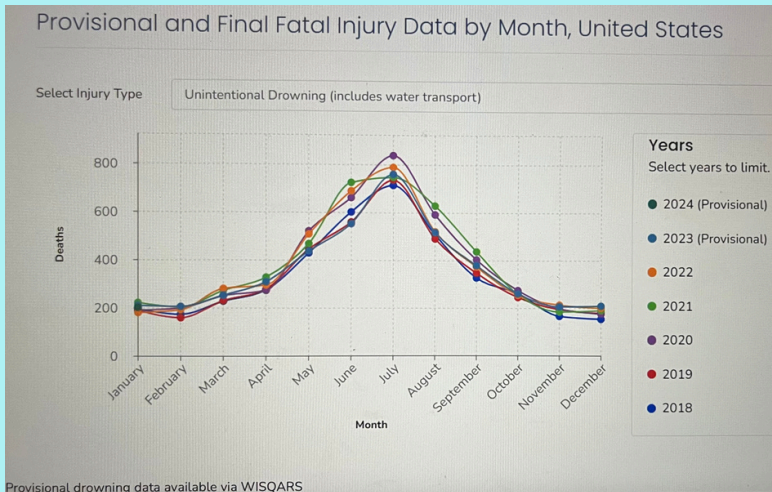


Every year countless families experience the unthinkable – the loss of a child to drowning. As a survival swim instructor, former ER tech, and advocate for water safety, I have witnessed firsthand the devastation parents experience in those tragic situations. My missions is to change that by equipping parents and caregivers with the knowledge and tools to keep their children safe.

In the U.S., drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children ages 1-4 (CDC). Florida, California and Arizona leading in fatalities. Florida, where I teach, has one of the highest rate in the nation. Yet, most drownings are preventable.

This guide distills years of experience, research, and proven safety practices into actionable steps you can take today – to protect your children and foster a lifelong respect for the water.

THE SILENT REALITY OF DROWNING



Drowning is not like the movies. There is no splashing, no dramatic cries for help. It is silent, fast and often unnoticed until it is too late.

Key facts as per CDC:

- Drowning can happen in 20-60 seconds.**
- Most drowning involving young children occur in home pools, relative's pool or friend's pool.**
- Even strong swimmers can drown if caught off guard.**

Common myths debunked:

- "I will hear if my child is in trouble" - False. Drowning is silent.**
- "He is a good swimmer, so he is safe" - False. Skills fade quickly without practice.**
- "We were just gone for a minute" - That is often all it takes.**

LAYERS OF PROTECTION



The most effective way to prevent drowning is through multiple safety layers:

- 1. Active supervision – Designate a “Water Watcher” at all times. National Drowning Prevention Alliance provides a free downloadable Water Watcher card that could be given to an adult supervising the children in the pool. Designated Water Watchers should rotate every 15 min to keep their attention fresh and without engaging in any other activities or distractions such as texting, drinking or social interactions.**





2. Barriers and Safety Devices- Fencing, self latching gates, alarms, pool covers.

Fencing should be at minimum 48"-60" inches high depending on your state statutes.

Pool covers - offer a physical layer of protection when preventing unauthorized access to pool. Make sure that the cover is secure and there is no open space that a child could slip through. Rain water that is collecting on top should be promptly removed.

Alarms- can be added to windows, doors, gates, doggy doors, the edge of the pool, under water. Those under water are specifically designed to sound immediately when the pool is entered. Hire a professional to do it.



3. Swim skills and Survival float:

- Everyone should know how to swim, we cannot survive without knowing the basic skills. All caretakers must understand that no one is ever “drown proof”, not even olympic swimmers.**
- Children learning these survival swim skills increase their chance of survival by 87% according to the study performed by Dr. Ruth Brenner in 2009.**
- American Academy of Pediatrics recommends starting swim classes at 1 year's old.**
- Red Cross recommends swim lessons for children as young as 6 months.**
- The international Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health in 2022 published a pilot study showing that infants ages 6-10 months who attended weekly swim lessons had higher scores in reflexes, grasping, fine motor skills and overall motor development than those who did not.**



4. Emergency preparedness:

- At least one adult in the household or in groups, such as pool parties should know how to perform Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) with rescue breaths.**
- Require babysitters and caregivers know CPR too.**
- Learn to recognize the signs of drowning: gasping or panicked eyes, no kicking or forward movement, head tilted back and mouth at water level.**
- Designate a specific person to call 911 and not just shout "somebody call 911".**

AGE BY AGE SAFETY GUIDELINES

INFANTS 0-12 MONTHS



Why infant water safety matters:

- babies can drown in as little as 1-2 inches of water
- they don't have neck or head control in H2O



Never leave baby unattended:

- stay within's arm reach
- no phones, no distractions, no walking away
- if you must leave, take the baby with you, even if you need to get a diaper



Bathtub safety rules:

- use a non slip safety mat
- fill tub with only 2-4 inches of water
- don't use bath seats or rings as replacement for supervision



Remove all water hazards after use:

- empty tub, sinks, any big containers
- keep toilet lids closed, use safety latches



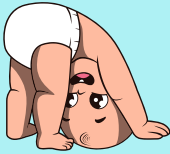
Early water familiarity:

- gently pour water over baby's face and shoulders to build comfort
- smile, stay calm, babies pick up on your energy

YOU ARE YOUR BABY'S LIFEGUARD

TODDLERS 1-4 YEARS OLD

CURIOSITY-MOBILITY AND SILENCE DON'T MIX



Why toddlers safety is critical:

- drowning is Nr. 1 cause of accidental death
- it happens quickly and silently
- most incidents happen when adults are nearby and distracted



Supervision:

- be always within arm's reach
- avoid multitasking when near open water, pool, canal etc
- assign a dedicated Water Watcher



Secure your home:

- install 4 sided isolation fencing around pool, minimum 4 feet high
- use self closing, self latching gates
- add door alarms, window locks, don't forget doggy doors alarms
- keep toilet lids closed with a latch



Enroll in survival swim lessons:

- prioritize programs that teach: back float, breath control and how to calmly recover from falls in the water



SCHOOL AGE 5-10 YEARS

CURIOUS-CONFIDENT-UNAWARE



Why it matters:

- drowning a top 2 cause of death especially in pools, lakes and open water
- often confident, fast moving and curious but easily distracted



Supervise constantly:

- be within reach of early swimmers
- designate a Water Watcher, no distractions
- never assume someone else is watching



Continue skills based lessons:

- 1:1 lessons are best for focus
- learn back float, repetition



Set simple and firm water rules:

- no running by the pool
- no pushing or breath holding games
- ask before entering the water
- don't go in water above your belly button



Practice what to do if they get tired:

- role play floating like a star
- teach phrase "If you tired, float on your back and call for help"
- life jackets in open waters
- teach them to recognize if someone is in trouble and to call for help, not jump in

AGES 10-15

INDEPENDENT-IMPULSIVE-INFLUENCED



Why this age is high risk:

- more likely to swim unsupervised
- vulnerable to peer pressure, risky dares and distractions
- drowning occurs often in lakes, ponds, rivers without active supervision



Swimming with a buddy ALWAYS:

- teach your child to stay with the group
- even strong swimmers should not swim alone
- establish rule: "If your friend goes under, don't follow, call for help"



No breath holding games:

- these challenges can lead to shallow water blackout and are a major cause of teen drowning
- set stringent rules and follow through



Respect open water:

- teach that open water is different from a pool, it has currents, weeds, limited visibility
- wear life jackets in open waters
- swim in designated areas with lifeguard
- no night swimming



AGES 15-21

RECKLESS-OVERCONFIDENT-VULNARABLE



Why it matters:

- highest risk of drowning in open water
- alcohol, overconfidence, peer pressure=major contributing factors
- assumptions- too old for supervision



Never swim alone:

- use body system, even strong swimmers can be caught off guard



No alcohol or drugs around water:

- alcohol is involved in up to 70% of drownings
- this delays reaction time, impairs judgment, increases high risk taking



Respect open waters:

- ocean, lakes, rivers can hide hidden dangers: rip tides, steep drop-offs, cold shock, rocks, weeds
- use life jackets when boating, jet skiing, tubing



Ditch the distractions:

- know your surroundings especially in unfamiliar places
- learn CPR

YES, WE ARE STILL THEIR PARENTS AND SHOULD SET RULES

SURVIVAL SKILL-WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW



FLOATING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WATER SAFETY SKILL

WHY IT SAVES LIVES:

- 1. It buys time to breathe by keeping your face out of the water even we are scared, tired or caught off guard**
- 2. It helps stay calm because it's the safest position to get into after falling in the water**
- 3. It works when you are tired because it gives time to recover and wait for help**
- 4. It build confidence and control when you know how to float which lowers panic, fear and risky behavior**
- 5. It's effective in all water types giving you a chance for survival**
- 6. Isn't just a skill, it's a safety strategy**



KEY STATISTICS:

- In rural areas drowning occurs at a 1.5x higher rate
- Children with autism are 160x more likely to experience fatal and on fatal drowning than neurotypical peers
- 80% of drowning victims are males
- 40 million adults don't know how to swim
- 32% of parents with children diagnosed with autism report that they had a "close call" of drowning for their child
- A parent who has never learned how to swim yields a 87% chance that their child won't learn either
- From 2012-2021, per CDC we had 4083 annual drownings and 8111 estimated ER visits due to non fatal drownings
- 77% of drownings happen in non swim time when no one expects the kids to be in the water

SURVIVAL SWIM LESSONS



A 2 YEAR OLD WHO LEARNED TO LOVE THE WATER BUT ALSO TO RESPECT IT



**THE CHARACTERS FROM “FLOATING FOR SURVIVAL”
TEACHING THESE SAFETY SKILLS THROUGH IMAGES AND
STORY**

MY 2 CENTS:

**IF YOUR CHILD CAN CRAWL- THEN THEY HAVE TO FLOAT
IF YOUR CHILD CAN WALK- THEY NEED TO KNOW BOTH: KICK
AND FLOAT**

HOW DO INFANTS AND TODDLERS LEARN?

- Babies 6-12 months have no cognitive awareness of depth whatsoever.
 - They cannot judge distance, space, or danger — everything is purely sensory and reflex-based.
 - What they can learn through repetition:
 - o Breath-holding response (submersion conditioning)
 - o Muscle memory for turning, floating, and waiting
 - o Trust in the instructor or caregiver in water
- Goal** at this stage: Teach them to instinctively float and breathe — not to panic or sink if they fall in.

Toddlers (1-3 years)

- Toddlers do not understand “deep vs. shallow” in a meaningful or safe way.
- They might recognize, “I can touch the bottom here,” but don’t yet grasp the risk of not being able to.
- Depth awareness is still emotional, not logical — based on experience, not reasoning.

What they can learn through survival swim:

- Turning around to reach the wall
- Floating until help comes
- Rolling from face-down to face-up
- Recognizing their limits through structured practice (not play)

Key at this stage: Teach consistent, reflexive behavior (float first, stay calm, breathe) — not rely on judgment or awareness.

FINDING A SWIM INSTRUCTOR

The 2 most known organization that focus on survival swim skills are:

- 1. Infant Aquatics (I am certified through IA)**
- 2. Infant Swimming Resource**

These 2 organizations focus on teaching self rescue techniques like floating, breath control and reaching safety after an unexpected fall in the water.

These lessons should be taught 1:1 as they are individualized to every child.

The instructor should have experience with your child's age.

Lessons should take place 4-5 times/week with about 10-15 min per day.

Ask all the questions you can think of before signing up.

YOUR CHILD DESERVES THIS LAYER OF PROTECTION

**EVEN IF YOU DON'T SIGN UP WITH ME, CALL
OR TEXT WITH ANY QUESTIONS
561-568-2343**