

FAMILY VACATION WATER SAFETY

Many families relish soaking up the sun during the winter months, and water activities frequently top their list of priorities. However, it's crucial to maintain the same level of caution practiced at home, especially when vacationing in unfamiliar surroundings. Holidays see parents and caregivers become more relaxed and sometimes distracted; it is essential to maintain your awareness and always stay vigilant. After all, the goal is for everyone to return home safe and sound.

Before embarking on your trip, educating yourself about the destination is essential to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. As you plan your vacation, take the time to review travel advisory sites for valuable insights and feedback from other travellers. Additionally, gather information about the destination's safety practices, especially regarding swimming and water sports.

If you plan to engage in specific activities like scuba diving, ensure that your resort offers a recognized professional program and has an excellent safety record in that particular activity. Researching and selecting reputable providers can significantly reduce the risk of accidents or injuries during your trip.

Additionally, consult with resort staff for advice and recommendations concerning aquatic activities. They can provide valuable insights specific to the area and offer guidance on enjoying those activities safely during your stay.

Enforce your family's water safety rules while on holiday

- ✓ Clearly define where and when your children are permitted to swim.
- ✓ Establish clear guidelines for when they must exit the pool, such as during severe weather, fatigue, or feeling unwell.

- ✓ Encourage everyone to swim with a buddy, emphasizing the importance of looking out for each other.
- ✓ Teach your family what to do in an emergency.
- ✓ Enforce rules against running, pushing, or engaging in rough play around the pool.
- ✓ Remind your children to follow any specific rules and guidelines set by the facility, such as no diving in shallow areas or no glass containers near the pool.
- ✓ Be aware of pool features such as drains, diving boards, and slides, and ensure children understand the associated risks.
- ✓ Consider learning CPR and basic water rescue skills to be prepared for emergencies.

Resort Swimming Pools

When visiting the swimming pool, it's crucial not to neglect your responsibility of directly supervising your young, non-swimming children. Always adhere to any specific rules and guidelines of the facility you're visiting, as additional measures may be in place to ensure safety. By following these guidelines, you create a safe and enjoyable swimming experience for everyone, including other guests, and instill good habits.

- **Be mindful of water quality:** Water quality in resort swimming pools and in jurisdictions outside Canada and the U.S. might not meet the same standards as at home. It's crucial to treat all resort swimming pools as if they were untreated, akin to natural bodies of water. This is especially important for outdoor facilities, where sunlight and heat can deplete sanitizing chemicals more rapidly.
- **Hot Tubs and Swim Spas:** Children under five should avoid using hot tubs because the water temperature is typically too hot for young children. However, if the water temperature of a swim spa is at or below 90 Fahrenheit (32 Celsius), it should be safe for them to use.

While water in hot tubs and spas may seem clean, it often harbours a high bacteria count. To combat the growth of bacteria and algae, a significant amount of chemicals is required, which can be detrimental to young children's skin. Moreover, the off-gassing resulting from

the chemical reactivity releases unhealthy gases that linger above the water's surface and can potentially irritate the lungs of young children.

Waterfronts & Beaches

Unlike treated pools, natural bodies such as lakes, rivers, and oceans are not protected or treated. They can change quickly and contain bacteria, viruses, and microscopic parasites. These microorganisms can increase the risk of skin, eye, ear, nose, and throat infections, as well as gastrointestinal illnesses, especially in shallow and warm bodies of water.

When visiting waterfront areas or beaches, be aware of potential risks and take necessary precautions. Here are some guidelines to ensure a safe experience:

- **Check water quality:** Before heading to the beach, check with the resort staff or local health authority for recent water test results or hazard warnings. However, it's important to note that tests provide only a snapshot of the water quality and conditions on the day the test was taken and can change rapidly. Factors such as wildlife and birds, human activity, rainfall and stormwater runoff, wind and wave action, temperature, and water flow can affect water quality.
- **Oceanside Resorts:** may also have a flag or signage warning system that explains current beach conditions. Pay attention to any signage instructions the resort or local authorities provide. If unsure as to the meaning of the warning system, ask the resort staff or local authorities to explain. Look for sites where there are lifeguard patrols.

Swim Between The Flags is a widely recognized safety reminder at beaches, especially in areas prone to strong currents or other potential hazards. It encourages beachgoers to remain within designated swimming areas monitored by lifeguards.

- **Avoid freshwater** swimming with young children. When travelling to warm climates with young children, it's advisable to steer clear of swimming in natural freshwater bodies like lakes, rivers, or ponds. These environments can host harmful parasites that

may lead to illnesses and lifelong issues. Instead, opt for swimming pools that are adequately treated and maintained to ensure a safer aquatic experience.

- **Rinse and dry after swimming:** After swimming in natural bodies of water, thoroughly rinse off with clean, fresh water. This helps remove any contaminants from the skin. Additionally, carefully dry the ears with a towel to prevent water from remaining in the ear canal, which can lead to discomfort or infection. Towel drying your child's body can also help remove any parasites that may be present on the skin surface.



Always Keep Children Within Arms Reach