



## Parenting

# Water smarts

## How to keep your child from drowning

It's the second biggest accidental cause of death for kids. Yet 88 percent of children who drown are under adult supervision, says a new study—half the time, their parents'. And 60 percent of victims are under age 4. To protect your child: **BY DANA SULLIVAN**

### HOME POOL

Two-thirds of kids who drown do so in their home pool. So in your own backyard—or in someone else's—be sure that:

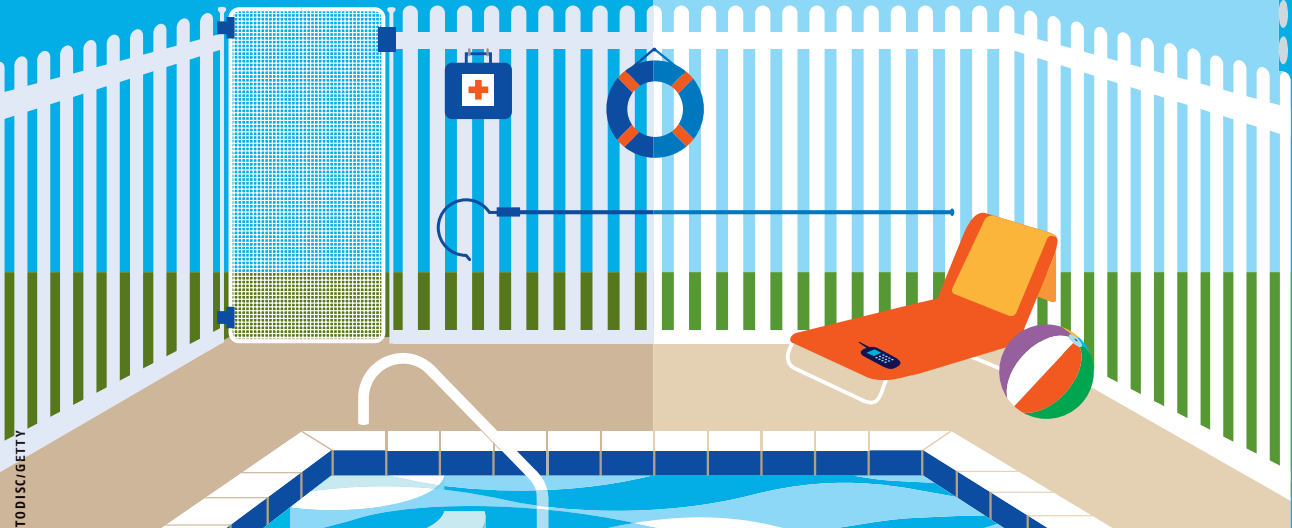
- **The pool is completely blocked off** by a fence that's at least four feet high and that a child can't pull himself over. The gate should be self-closing as well as self-locking.

- **There's no furniture near the outside of the fence**, since kids will climb!
- **A first-aid kit and basic rescue equipment** are located near the pool.
- **A phone is near the pool.** An adult's leaving to get the phone (or door) is a leading reason children drown.

- **You stay put, always.** Yell a welcome if someone rings the doorbell and you're the only adult. Or clear everyone out of the pool, lock the gate, and then get the door.
- **Tricycles, bikes, and other non-water toys are far away from poolside.** Kids can fall into the water

very easily when reaching for—or riding on—toys.

- **You cover the pool securely.** Consider buying a power-operated cover, if you can afford it. That way, it's easy to remove the cover before allowing anyone to swim—and to close it completely when you're done.



### Around any body of water:

- Never leave a child alone, even for a minute, whether near the water or in it.
- Missing a child? Check the water first. Drowning can happen in three minutes.
- Swimming lessons are important, when kids are ready (age 4 and up). But even those who can swim will still need constant adult supervision.

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security if your child is using water wings or similar flotation aides. They're toys, not true lifesaving devices.
- Swim at a pool, lake, or beach with a lifeguard whenever possible.
- Enforce pool rules against running, pushing, and jumping on each other. No one should dive unless it's considered safe—check the rules, if they're posted.

- On any boat, children under 12 should always wear a USCG-approved personal flotation device (PFD) life jacket. Test the fit in a pool: Cinch the chest and crotch straps, then pick your child up by the shoulder straps to make sure the PFD is snug.
- In a river or the ocean, keep your child at arm's reach. Stand with the deepest water behind you and your child in front.
- Take a CPR course—it can be a lifesaver.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JOHN PIRMAN PHOTOGRAPH: PHOTODISC/GETTY

## IN AN EMERGENCY

If you find an unconscious child in water, move him to a firm, flat surface and place him on his back. Check for signs of breathing, movement, or coughing. If none are present, have someone call 911 (or call yourself). Then:

### For babies (younger than 1)

1. Tilt his head back and lift his chin to open his airway. Look, listen, and feel for breathing for five seconds.



2. If he's not breathing, give two rescue breaths: Put your mouth over the baby's nose and mouth and exhale twice. You should be able to see his chest rise and fall.



3. If there's no sign of movement or coughing, place your index and middle fingers at the center of his chest, a half inch below the nipples. Give five chest compressions, pressing straight down a half inch to an inch, at a rate of at least 100 per minute. After every five compressions, give one rescue breath. Continue for three minutes, then check for breathing and a pulse. Continue the compression-breathing cycle until he's breathing on his own or help arrives.



### For children 1 and older

1. Follow step 1 (at left).



2. If he's not breathing, give two rescue breaths: Pinch his nose shut, place your mouth over his, and exhale twice. You should see his chest rise and fall.



3. If there's still no sign of breathing, movement, or coughing, begin chest compressions. Place the heel of your hand on the center of his chest and press straight down, about an inch to one and a half inches, at a rate of 100 per minute. Give one breath after every five compressions. Continue for three minutes, then check again for signs of breathing,

movement, or coughing. Continue the cycle of compressions and breathing until the child is breathing on his own or help arrives.

**IMPORTANT:** Reading about CPR is not enough to teach you how to perform it. All parents and anyone who is responsible for the care of children should complete a course in basic CPR.

Resources: Mark Brandenburg, M.D., an emergency-room physician at the Trauma Emergency Center of St. Francis Hospital, in Tulsa, OK, and author of *Child Safe: A Guide for Preventing Childhood Injuries*; Stacey Grissom of the American Red Cross; the American Academy of Pediatrics; the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety; and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.

**The riskiest day** More pool drownings occur on the **Fourth of July** than on any other day of the year. One reason is that adults may be distracted by socializing and alcohol.