

Summer

Health & Safety



Week 6 - Water Safety

In the Pool

Protect yourself and your children against recreational water illness (RWI), caused by germs that can live in pools.

Follow these steps to stay safe in pool water:

1. Don't swim when you or your child has diarrhea. You can easily spread germs into pool water that may not be killed by chlorine and that will make others sick
2. Don't swallow pool water, and avoid getting water in your mouth.
3. Shower with soap before swimming, and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Ensure your child washes with soap and water before getting in the pool
4. Take your kids on bathroom breaks, and check diapers often. Accidents can contaminate the water
5. Cover open cuts and scrapes with bandages, making sure to clean the area before putting on the bandage. Clean and re-cover the wound with a fresh bandage after swimming
6. Kiddie pools and inflatable pools present a high risk for RWI. Inflatable pools usually hold tap water, which may not contain a disinfectant. Do not add bleach or cleaner to inflatable pools. Instead, empty after each use and wipe down with an antibacterial cleaner. If a child has diarrhea or a dirty diaper, remove them from the water, empty the pool, and wipe it down with an antibacterial cleaner

General Swimming Pool Safety

Talk with your children about practicing water safety at your local pool.

1. Speak with kids about areas in which they are allowed to swim
2. Sign your children up for swimming lessons to ensure their safety
3. Ask lifeguards or swim instructors about water safety demonstrations. Many facilities offer small demonstrations at no charge
4. Go over the pool rules with your child(ren)
5. Have a meeting spot during swim breaks to check in and reapply sunscreen
6. Don't leave children unattended. Although many pools have lifeguards on staff, it only takes seconds for a child to drown

Summer

Health & Safety



Week 6 - Water Safety

If you are a home pool owner, there are added safety concerns.

1. Ensure that your pool has the appropriate fencing and gates. The Red Cross reports many children who drown in home pools were out of sight for less than five minutes and in the care of one or both parents
2. Before using pool chemicals, seek training on pool chemical maintenance and safety
3. Keep pool chemicals labeled and well out of reach of children
4. Refer to the CDC's Pool Chemical Safety Handout for more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/pdf/swimming/resources/chemicalsafety/pool-chemical-safety-poster.pdf>
5. The Red Cross provides a checklist to make sure your home pool is summer ready: <http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/checklists/PoolSafety.pdf>

At the lake, river or ocean

Is the water at your favorite beach safe?

River, ocean and lake water can all be contaminated at some time or another. Contaminated water may occur for various reasons. The most frequent causes are sewage overflows, polluted stormwater runoff, sewage treatment plan malfunctions, boating waste and malfunctioning septic systems. Rainwater can also pick up these various wastes and carry it into a larger body of water. It is important to check the safety of the water at your favorite recreation spot to ensure optimal safety for your family.

To find information on your favorite summer beach spot:

Go to <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/asp/spbeaches/state-park-beach-status.asp> to determine beach openings, closings and bacteria levels for beaches in Missouri State Parks.

Ocean Safety:

- Check surf conditions before entering the water
- Stay in the designated swim area
- Know local weather conditions
- Swim with a buddy
- Look out for marine life, and consider foot protection

Summer

Health & Safety



Week 6 - Water Safety

Lake and River Safety:

- Select an area that is clean, with good water quality
- Make sure water is deep enough before entering headfirst. Encourage feet-first jumps instead of diving. There may be rocks or sunken trees you cannot see
- Make sure rafts and docks are in good condition, with no loose boards, electrical concerns or exposed nails

For more information, refer to the Red Cross handout for swimming safely in lakes, rivers, and streams: <http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/checklists/LakesRivers.pdf>

Boating:

Anyone operating a boat in Missouri who was born after Jan. 1, 1984, must have a state-issued boating license. Go to <http://www.boat-ed.com/mol/handbook/index.htm> for the handbook, and contact the Missouri State Highway Water Patrol Division for testing centers near you: boatInfo@mshp.dps.mo.gov or 573-751-3313.

Be safe on the boat and in the water. Follow these U.S. Coast Guard tips:

1. Enroll in a boating safety class
2. Always wear your life jacket, and have life jackets for each passenger
3. File a float plan. Let someone else know your intended route, and when you plan to leave and come back
4. Have safety equipment in good working order
5. Hold a vessel safety check before heading out: Are there enough life jackets? Do you have the contact information for Water Patrol and a cell phone? Is there a first-aid kit on board?
6. Familiarize yourself with the vessel — whether you own the boat or are renting it — before getting underway
7. Check the weather and water conditions. Be aware of flooded areas
8. Do not operate a boat while under the influence
9. Don't overload your boat. Too many people in a boat make it more likely to tip over
10. Focus your attention and designate someone to be your lookout. Distracted drivers can lead to accidents
11. Operate at a safe speed and obey all signage

Summer

Health & Safety



Week 6 - Water Safety

Life Jacket Buying Guide

Staying Afloat

Life jackets are important for all ages during trips to the river, lake or ocean. Life jackets minimize strain on the body during swimming and water sports. They also make it easier to see swimmers in the water.

Life jackets aren't just for activities in large bodies of water. Children benefit from wearing life jackets in the pool: They keep the child afloat, and bright colors make it easier to spot children. Floaties, water wings and inner tubes are fun to play with, but they may deflate or malfunction. Life jackets are a safer option for little swimmers.

When choosing a life jacket, consider the following:

- **Color:** Bright colors make it easier to see children in the water. They can be a warning for watercraft not to get too close and assist with rescue in case of emergency
- **Weight:** Life jackets are built to handle certain weights; make sure the weight range on the life vest matches the weight of your child
- **Safety locks:** Many life jackets come with safety locks to keep children secure and prevent wiggling out or unclaspings the restraints. Younger children need between-leg support and head support features
- **Fit and size:** This is the most important feature to consider when choosing a life jacket. A life jacket should not come above the child's ears when arms are raised above the head. Never put a child in an adult life jacket
- **U.S. Coast Guard label:** This label means the life jacket has been tested and approved, and has the minimum buoyancy for a child's weight
- **Restraints:** Check buckles and straps for proper function. Discard any life jacket with torn fabric or loose straps
- **Personal Flotation Device (PFD) categories:** PFDs are categorized by type I, II, III, IV, and V. Generally, the lower the number, the better the performance. Only use type I, II, or III for children

Summer

Health & Safety



Week 6 - Water Safety

Water Exercise Tips

Exercising in the water can make physical activity seem less like a chore and more like a treat! According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), just 2½ hours per week of aerobic physical activity, such as swimming, can decrease the risk of chronic disease. Swimmers have about half the risk of death compared with inactive people. People report enjoying exercise more in the water than they do on land, and most people can exercise longer in the water because of decreased joint and muscle impact.

The weightless effect of the water decreases strain while providing resistance to build strong muscles. Swimming is also a full-body workout that contributes to total body health. For example, when a person is simply treading water, both legs and arms are engaged, as well as abdominal and back muscles.

Try these tips for water fun:

- Play tag with family for a fast-paced game that causes you to run or swim against water resistance
- Bobs: Simply bounce up and down in the water. This increases heart rate and is fun for smaller children to practice. It's also easy to do in pools with little room
- Pick up your child and pull the child along in the water while they kick. This is a good arm strengthening exercise
- Toss around a beach ball or football
- Have relay races across the pool
- Challenge your kids to swim around an entire area of the pool with you. Keep in mind the appropriate depth of water for your child
- Tread water! Lift your feet off the bottom of the pool, and, using your arms and legs to kick, stay upright in the water without touching the bottom and without grabbing the side
- Use equipment to move around in the water! Some facilities rent out or lend kickboards, bars, diving rings or water weights. Ask or check the pool rules before bringing your own equipment

Check your local pool for listings for water aerobics classes and adult swim times. Most pools offer classes for a reduced fee or free depending on membership rules. Also, adult swim time or “swim breaks” at the pool are designated to give the adults more opportunity to move around in the water—take advantage of it!

Summer

Health & Safety



Week 6 - Water Safety

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