



Stay safe in the water with tips from the Red Cross!

General Water Safety Tips

- Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. Always swim with a buddy; never swim alone. The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability. To enroll in a swim course, contact the Red Cross by calling (518) 458-8111, or [click here](#).
- Swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard.
- Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
- Children or inexperienced swimmers should take precautions, such as wearing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal floatation device (PFD) when around the water.
- Watch out for the dangerous “too’s” – too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.
- Set water safety rules for the whole family based on swimming abilities (for example, inexperienced swimmers should stay in water less than chest deep).
- Be knowledgeable of the water environment you are in and its potential hazards, such as deep and shallow areas, currents, depth changes, obstructions and where the entry and exit points are located. The more informed you are, the more aware you will be of hazards and safe practices.
- Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather.
- Use a feet-first entry when entering the water.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstructions.
- Do not mix alcohol with swimming, diving or boating. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body's ability to stay warm.
- Know how to prevent, recognize, and respond to emergencies.

Boating Safety

- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination: more than 50% of drownings result from boating incidents involving alcohol.
- Look for the label: Use Coast Guard-approved life jackets for yourself and your passengers when boating and fishing.
- Develop a float plan. Anytime you go out in a boat, give a responsible person details about where you will be and how long you will be gone. This is important because if the boat is delayed because of an emergency, becomes lost, or encounters other problems, you want help to be able to reach you.

- Find a boating course in your area (U.S. Power Squadron, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, US Sailing, etc) -- these courses teach about navigation rules, emergency procedures and the effects of wind, water conditions, and weather.
- Watch the weather: Know local weather conditions and prepare for electrical storms. Watch local news programs. Stop boating as soon as you see or hear a storm.

Home Pools

- Never leave a child unsupervised around water. Adult supervision is recommended.
- Install a phone by the pool or keep a cordless phone nearby so that you can call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- Learn Red Cross CPR and insist that babysitters, grandparents, and others who care for your child know CPR.
- Post CPR instructions and 9-1-1 or your local emergency number in the pool area.
- Always keep basic lifesaving equipment by the pool and know how to use it. Pole, rope, and personal flotation devices (PFDs) are recommended.
- Keep toys away from the pool when it is not in use. Toys can attract young children into the pool.
- Pool covers should always be completely removed prior to pool use.
- If a child is missing, check the pool first. Go to the edge of the pool and scan the entire pool, bottom, and surface, as well as the surrounding pool area

Keeping Kids Safe In, On, and Around the Water

- Maintain constant supervision. Watch children around any water environment (pool, stream, lake, tub, toilet, bucket of water), regardless of the child's swimming proficiency nor how shallow the water. For younger children, stay within an arm's length reach.
- Don't rely on substitutes. The use of flotation devices and inflatable toys **cannot** replace parental supervision. Such devices could suddenly shift position, lose air, or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.
- Enroll children in a Red Cross water safety course or Learn-to-Swim classes. Your decision to provide your child with an early aquatic experience is a gift that will have infinite rewards. These courses encourage safe practices. [Click here for course offerings and locations.](#)
- Parents should take a CPR course. Knowing these skills can be important around the water and you will expand your capabilities in providing care for your child. [Click here to enroll in a CPR course.](#)

Lakes and Rivers

- Select a supervised area. A trained lifeguard who can help in an emergency is the best safety factor. Even good swimmers can have an unexpected medical emergency in the water.
- Never swim alone.
- Select an area that has good water quality and safe natural conditions. Murky water, hidden underwater objects, unexpected drop-offs, and aquatic plant life are hazards. Water pollution can cause health problems for swimmers.
- Make sure the water is deep enough before entering headfirst. Too many swimmers are seriously injured every year by entering headfirst into water that is too shallow. A feet-first entry is much safer than diving.

- Be sure rafts and docks are in good condition. A well-run open-water facility keeps rafts and docks in good condition, with no loose boards or exposed nails. Never swim under a raft or dock. Always look before jumping off a dock or raft to be sure no one is in the way.

Ocean Safety

- Stay within the designated swimming area, ideally within the visibility of a lifeguard.
- **Never** swim alone.
- Check the surf conditions **before** you enter the water. Check to see if a warning flag is up or check with a lifeguard for water conditions, beach conditions, or any potential hazards.
- Stay away from piers, pilings, and diving platforms when in the water.
- Keep a lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals may be dangerous. Avoid patches of plants. Leave animals alone.
- Make sure you always have enough energy to swim back to shore.
- Don't try to swim against a current if caught in one. Swim gradually out of the current, by swimming across it.