Tips to Prevent Drowning

Going for a swim in the pool or lake is a great way to keep cool in the summer heat. While taking a dip in the water is a lot of fun, it’s important to know how to prevent children from drowning. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury and death in children ages 0-14 in Massachusetts. Here are some tips for preventing drowning when your children go for a swim.

**HOW CAN I PREVENT MY YOUNGER CHILD FROM DROWNING?**

For babies, younger children and people who have less experience swimming, it’s **important** to have an adult nearby who knows how to swim and can watch for danger. It’s also important to follow these tips to prevent drowning:

- **Make sure your child learns how to swim**
  
  If your child knows how to swim, he or she will be safer and more confident in the water, whether it’s a pool, lake or other body of water.

- **Learn how to swim if you don’t know how**
  
  If you know how to swim, you can help teach your child how to swim and stay safe in the water. You can also help your child if he/she is ever in danger while in the water.

- **Never leave your child alone in the water – even for a moment**
  
  You should always be an arms-length away from your child in the water, including a bathtub. Your child can drown in even a few inches of water if he/she is not watched carefully.

- **Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation)**
  
  CPR is a lifesaving technique that can help your child or others who are near drowning. Many schools or community centers, like your local YMCA, offer classes to learn CPR.

**Did you know?**

When a child is drowning, it’s often silent and happens very quickly. Children don’t splash or yell for help when drowning, like you’d see on T.V. or in a movie.

Children can go underwater quickly and especially in strong currents, like in the ocean. If you notice your child is missing, check the water first to see if he/she went underwater.
HOW CAN I PREVENT MY OLDER CHILD FROM DROWNING?

For older children, teenagers and people with more experience swimming, it’s still important to have an adult nearby who knows how to swim and can watch for danger. It’s also important to follow these tips to prevent drowning:

- **Make sure your child learns how to swim**
  If your child knows how to swim, he or she will be safer and more confident in the water, whether it’s a pool, lake or other body of water.

- **Learn how to swim if you don’t know how**
  If you know how to swim, you can help teach your child how to swim and stay safe in the water. You can also help your child if he/she is ever in danger while in the water.

- **If your older child knows how to swim, have him/her swim with a buddy**
  Swimming buddies are fun and allow each person to look out for each other in case of danger.

- **Put a gate with a lock around your pool**
  This way, your child won’t be able to get into the pool without an adult to watch them. Store the key in a safe place.

- **Talk to your child about avoiding alcohol while swimming**
  This is especially important for teenagers. Alcohol plays a part in up to half of all teenage and adult drowning accidents in the United States. Make sure you and your children don’t drink alcohol near or in any type of water.

- **Learn CPR**
  CPR is a lifesaving technique that can help your child or others who are near drowning. Many schools or community centers, like your local YMCA, offer classes to learn CPR.

Adapted from “Drowning Prevention Tips” by Peter T. Masiakos, MD: https://giving.massgeneral.org/drowning-prevention-tips/