

## Wat'er You Gonna Do To Prevent Your Child From Drowning?

In Florida, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for infants and young children under the age of four years. Bonita Springs Fire-Rescue promotes three lines of defense to help stop this epidemic.

**Constant Supervision:** Continuous supervision is the only sure way to prevent drowning. However, supervision can break down. **If you cannot find your child, check the pool first.** To ensure adequate supervision:

- Never leave your child alone in the bathtub or pool- not even for a second.
- Bring your phone by the pool so you don't have to leave to answer the phone.
- Leave a responsible adult in charge of safety not an older child. Many children have drowned with their older sibling in the pool.
- Never assume someone else is watching your child. Make sure one person knows they are in charge of supervision.

**Pool Safety:** Safety measures can be taken to make your pool safer for children.

- Install a permanent fence that is 4-6 feet high around all four sides of the pool.
- Remove objects near the fence that would allow a child to climb over.
- Water levels should be two inches from the top to make climbing out easier.
- Position jets so that floating objects will end up in the shallow end near the steps.
- Ladders, swim outs, or built-in steps should be located at each end of the pool.
- Install alarms on gates, windows, and doors that lead to pool.
- Dump anything holding more than an inch of water.
- Purchase locks for toilet lids.

**Survival Swimming and CPR Programs:** Teach young children to swim and adults what to do if their child is unconscious.

- Your child should learn a sequencing of skills that includes how to swim, turn on his back to float, rest and breathe, and flip back over to swim to the wall.
- All swimming lessons should be on an individual basis. The instructor should not divide her attention between several students.
- Your child's instructor should thoroughly explain water intoxication to you and what precautions will be taken.
- Do not enroll your child in any swim program before the age of 6 months.
- Do not allow anyone to throw your child into the water. This could result in brain damage.
- No one is ever drown-proof, even children who have taken swim lessons.
- CPR and immediate activation of 911 can greatly improve chances of survival. CPR classes are provided by your local fire department.

In addition to your pool, private pools of homes around you can be particularly hazardous to young children. Parents should look for these neighborhood pool hazards:

- The pool fence locks and knobs are low enough for children to access.
- The pool fence is absent, broken, or only partially surrounding the water.

- Steps are near above-ground pools when pool is empty.

The Bonita Springs Fire-Rescue District has created Water Watcher Packets with checklists for your pool area, information on swim lessons, and safety products. The packets are available at any Bonita Springs Fire Station or Bonita Springs City Hall.

**BY THE NUMBERS:**

“69 percent of drowning victims were being supervised, but at time of death, were left alone momentarily.” *Consumer Products Safety Commission*

“Each year, nationally, more than 1,000 children, ages 14 and younger drown. An additional 4,000 children are hospitalized for near-drowning. 15% of children admitted for near-drowning, die in the hospital.”

*National Injury Prevention Center*

77% of pool injuries occurred in less than two minutes.

50% of the child victims of pool injuries were last seen inside.

Of the children who survive, 5-20 percent suffer severe and permanent disability.