



WATER WISDOM AND SWIMMING SMARTS!

Before you get out there and cool off this summer by enjoying a splash in the water, make sure you know how to prevent, recognize, and respond to water emergencies.



Drowning Prevention Tips:

- Parents: If you are not within arms' reach, you've gone too far. Children ALWAYS need supervision when playing around or in the water regardless of their ability to swim.
- Always swim with a buddy so that you can help each other or go for help in case of an emergency.
- Keep an eye on other swimmers; if they appear tired, encourage them to rest on land.
- Enrol in swimming and life-saving programs.
- Swim within your ability. In open water weak swimmers should swim where they can touch the bottom and wear a PFD. Everyone should swim parallel to the shore.
- Swim in lifeguard supervised areas or areas designated by buoy lines or flags.
- Pay attention to warning signs - "No lifeguard on duty," "Dangerous undertow," etc.
- The first entry into any body of water should be feet first.
- If you feel cold, get out of the water immediately. Even in the summer, many rivers are cold enough to cool your body so fast you can't swim (hypothermia).
- Don't mix water activities and alcohol. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination. It also affects your body's ability to stay warm.
- Check the local weather forecast before swimming. Get out of the water at the first sign of bad weather.
- Keep well hydrated and reapply sunscreen frequently and liberally.

What if you feel like you're in trouble?

- See if you can touch bottom. People have drowned in shallow water, not realizing they could stand up.
- Don't try to swim against a current if caught in one. Swim gradually out of a current by swimming parallel to shore until you feel the current relax, then swim to shore.
- Call out for help.
- Keep your head and arms in the water as much as possible. Whatever you raise out of the water will serve as a weight and drive you downward.
- If you cannot call for help or make it to safety, then float on your back and angle your travel towards shore. Most people can float for long periods of time, but do not attempt to when they are panicked.

Open Water Safety:

- Use extreme caution when using natural bodies of water as they have limited visibility. Hidden hazards like branches and rocks can be very dangerous.
- Watch for dangerous waves that can knock you off your feet. They can cause back injuries and pull you back into the water if you're not careful.
- Waterways such as rivers can be unpredictable with unstable or turbulent currents, which can carry even expert swimmers far from shore.
- Watch out for uneven bottoms, holes and drop-offs. The bottom of lakes and dams can be soft, uneven and changeable.
- Be careful around steep or slippery banks.
- Wear foot protection. Feet can get burned from the sand, cut from glass or debris in the sand or water.
- Be sure rafts and docks have 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

What should you do if you see a swimmer in distress?

The rescuer should begin with the safest methods and proceed to higher risk action only if necessary:

REACH: Extend to the victim a pole, paddle, life jacket, towel or article of clothing.

THROW: Toss a floating device to the victim to allow him to stay afloat while he is pulled or kicks himself to safety.

ROW: Help the victim from the safety of a boat if available.

GO: Enter the water and go to the victim with a buoyant object. With it, he may be able to kick to safety.

TOW: If the victim cannot swim, he MUST be towed or carried. This is a dangerous procedure because it involves direct contact with someone who may panic. Since a significant number of people drown each year trying to rescue others, it follows that making such rescues has even higher risks, and should only be attempted after all other lesser risk options have been exhausted.

Adapted from the Lifesaving Society