



Drowning Prevention Tips for Teens Ages 12-18 Years

As your child becomes a teenager, you will have less influence over his actions. Injury rates go up, especially among males. Peer pressure may cause teens to reject what they have learned. Water safety rules must be firm and backed up with logical reasons and consequences.

Alcohol and Drugs:

Alcohol and drugs can be lethal around the water. A drunk body can't respond well in an emergency. Being drunk alters the sense of direction; someone who is drunk may swim toward the bottom when a boat capsizes.

- Never allow or use alcohol or drugs around the water.
- Attach clear consequences to alcohol or drug use.
- Set an example for your teen.

Swimming and Diving:

- Sign up your teen for swimming lessons if he's not a swimmer. Learning how to float, tread water and swim to safety are critical skills. Ask your local pool to offer teen-only swim classes.
- Stress the importance of swimming in supervised areas and using the buddy system.
- Know where your teen is and devise a system for checking in.
- Encourage your teen to learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and life-saving techniques and skills.
- Make sure your teen knows not to dive in unknown or shallow water. Dive only in water at least nine feet deep to avoid a head, neck or back injury.
- Spend time as a family learning how to identify risks like cold water, currents, high water and rip tides.]

- Emphasize that swimming across a lake or river is not like swimming in a pool and that life vests can be worn if doing this.

Babysitting:

- Babysitters should not be alone when in charge of children in the water.
- Babysitters should not be expected to bathe babies or young children if they do not feel qualified.

On a Boat:

Boating is a privilege for all on board and has laws just like driving the family car. It requires driver training, use of life vests — also known as life jackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs), no alcohol or drug use and accountability for breaking laws.

- Require everyone to wear a life vest — fasten it before even going out on the dock. Be a model and wear yours, too.
- A life vest that fits is required by law for each person on board a boat.
- Be sure your teen can handle himself in the boat and in the water.
- Keep boat and safety equipment in good repair.
- If you suspect that drinking occurs on friends' boats, contact the parents with your concerns.
- Take a boating safety class with your teen. Call 1-800-336-2628 for details.
- Wear a life vest for inner tubing and rafting, too.

For More Information

- Talk with your health care provider
- Visit the Washington State Drowning Prevention Network Web site: www.seattlechildrens.org/dp