

# **6 VITAL WATER SAFETY TIPS FOR SAFE, HEALTHY, AND CONNECTED FAMILIES**



We love playing in water. And New Jersey has plenty of it—there's 141 miles of beaches! We've got amazing water parks, beautiful lakes, rivers, and thousands of backyard pools all over the state. But water is inherently dangerous, and when we add kids to the mix things can get very hectic very quickly. That's why we want you to refresh on 4 crucial water safety tips!

## **1. NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN ALONE NEAR WATER**

A child can drown in just a few inches of water, in just a few seconds, without any splashing or cries for help. Shallow pools, such as inflatable portable backyard pool sets, do not prevent drowning risks.

In fact, most drowning incidents for teens and younger occur at home. All the more reason to be vigilant and alert when your kids are playing in or near water. Research tells us toddlers are the most susceptible to water safety risks. They lack critical experience and motor skills to get out of danger once they are in it.

Prevention is the best strategy but if you find a child in danger, only attempt CPR if you are trained to do so! The first thing to do is call 911 and then follow the dispatcher's instructions.

## **2. TAKE LOCAL SWIM CLASSES**

Swim lessons are integral to water safety. Many New Jersey communities have their own public swimming pools which offer private lessons or classes, and many gyms which have pools, such as your local YMCA, offer swimming lessons for all ages. Self-sufficiency in and around water is your number one tool to prevent danger. According to studies, kids who have had swimming lessons have an 88% reduced risk of drowning. For additional steps for healthy swimming check out this checklist from the CDC.



### **3. BE MINDFUL OF UNDERTOW, RIP TIDES, AND RIP CURRENTS**

Rip currents are a hidden risk when swimming in the ocean and are the source of 80% of lifeguard rescues every year. You must be mindful of young children in ocean water and never let them out too far unaccompanied, as strong undertows from waves can pull children very easily into rip currents. But what's the difference between undertow, rip current and rip tides?

**UNDERTOW** happens with every wave crash, it's when the water gets pulled back into the ocean. Note: Before and after a storm, in choppy water, we see increased undertow strength and danger.

**RIP CURRENTS** pull swimmers out into water past breaking waves, and into water that is too deep very quickly. If you find yourself being pulled out too far experts recommend swimming diagonally toward shore, rather than straight back in order to exit the current's influence.

**RIPTIDES** can only occur in inlets, and describe when water is pulled back out to the ocean during a tidal change. Many people use rip tide and rip current interchangeably, but this is not the case.

To avoid these dangers you can learn how to spot them from the National Weather Service, as well as check the forecasts of your local beaches. New Jersey beaches are in the Philadelphia zone on their maps.

### **4. AUTISTIC CHILDREN ARE ATTRACTED TO WATER**

Research has shown that children diagnosed with autism have a tendency to wander, and are at the same time drawn to water. Data collected has shown that 91% of deaths of children with a diagnosis are due to accidental drownings after wandering away from a safe area. Children ages 5 – 7 years are at highest risk.

Along with swimming lessons, we recommend following a few other safety measures, with a priority on prevention:

- Strict, consistent, rules, such as “Do not go near water without adults.”
- Reach out to your neighbors about your child's wandering habits.
- If you have a pool, keep it gated and locked.

There are certain dangers associated with water. When we are diligent and alert around water we can maximize fun and great memories and minimize risks. Following these four crucial water safety tips will keep your family safe, healthy and connected every time you go for a swim!

## 5. CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

### LAKES



### POOLS



Water safety experts revealed the safest colors for swimming, depending on the environment location: light/dark pools and lakes.

Neon colors provided more contrast and performed best in both pools and lakes. Dark colors, like purple and black could be seen well in pools, but were recommended against because they may be mistaken for dirt, leaves, or shadows.

For lakes, neon colors in the orange, green, and yellow family were the most visible. Neon pink did not perform well, and white, while visible, could be confused as a reflection on the water. However, no matter the swimsuit color, at two feet below the lake surface, visibility dropped to zero.

## 6. LOOK FOR AND OBEY SIGNAGE

Pool and beach signage plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety of visitors by clearly communicating important information and guidelines, such as “No Diving,” “Strong Currents,” or “Swim at Your Own Risk.” Additionally, signs can inform about the presence of lifeguards, designated swimming areas, and emergency contact information.