

Every accidental drowning is a tragic reminder of how quickly life can be taken from a child who is in or near water. According to Safe Kids Gwinnett more than 700 children ages 14 and under died in 2009 in the U.S. due to an unintentional drowning. In 2010, an estimated 5,651 children were nonfatally injured due to a near drowning incident.

Although 90 percent of parents say they supervise their children while they are swimming, many acknowledge that they engage in other distracting activities at the same time – talking, eating, reading, or taking care of another child. Safe Kids Gwinnett urges parents and caregivers to actively supervise their children when they are in or near water at all times.

A child can get into trouble in a matter of seconds. This is why it is so important that adults actively supervise kids when they are in or near water and take turns serving as the designated 'Water Watcher' to ensure that a watchful eye is on the children at all times.



Safe Kids Gwinnett cautions that even a near-drowning incident can have lifelong consequences. Kids who survive a near drowning may experience brain damage that can cause memory problems, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functions. In fact, after just four to six minutes under water – the damage is usually irreversible.

To help keep kids safe this pool season, Safe Kids Gwinnett recommends using layers of protection and to **Lock, Look, and Learn:**

Lock


- Pools and spas should be surrounded on all four sides by a fence at least four feet high with self-closing and self-latching gates. This type of isolation fencing could prevent 50 to 90 percent of child drowning in residential pools.
- Pools and spas should have compliant anti-entrapment drain covers and back up devices to ensure safer places for children to swim.
- Be mindful of inflatable or portable pools – these types of pools can also pose a drowning risk and are generally not separated by fencing on all four sides.

Look

- Always watch children when they are around any type of water. According to a national study, a parent or caregiver claimed to be supervising the child in nearly nine out of 10 child drowning-related deaths.
- Designate a "Water Watcher" – a responsible adult who is in charge of watching children while they are in or near water. The Water Watcher should not be distracted by phone calls, text messages, reading or talking to others.
- Supervise children even if they know how to swim – knowing how to swim does not prevent drowning. Children who can't swim well or can't swim at all should be within your arm's reach. They can also wear properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets.
- Keep a phone near you – use it only to call for help if there is an emergency.
- If a child is missing, check the water first.

Learn

- Learn how to swim – it is an important skill for both children and adults to know.
- Learn to use life jackets. Children who can't swim or can't swim well can wear U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets that are appropriate for the child's size and weight. Don't rely on inflatable swimming toys such as water wings and noodles; these toys should never be used in place of U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets.
- Learn CPR and know how to use rescue equipment – these are important skills to know if there is an emergency. In less than two hours, you can learn effective interventions that can give a fighting chance to a child whose breathing and heartbeat have stopped.
- Teach children water safety rules such as never swim alone, always wear a life jacket while boating, and never swim or play near pool or spa drains.



Even a near-drowning incident can have lifelong consequences. Kids who survive a near drowning may experience brain damage that can cause memory problems, learning disabilities, and permanent loss of basic functions. In fact, after just four to six minutes under water – the damage is usually irreversible.

For more information about drowning and water safety, call Safe Kids Gwinnett at 678.518.4854 or visit www.safekids.org/water.

Safe Kids Gwinnett works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Safe Kids Gwinnett is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Gwinnett is led by Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services



Swimming Lessons

Visit www.tvgwinnett.com to view this video and other water safety messages from the Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services