[](http://www.redcross.org/)

**Swim Safety**

**Warm Weather and Swimming Go Hand in Hand**

Swimming is a great recreational sport that can be enjoyed by people of all ages. But it’s important to know how to be safe while you’re in the water. The American Red Cross offers these important safety tips you should be aware of before you head out to the pool or beach:

* Swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards.
* Always swim with a buddy; do not allow anyone to swim alone.
* Never leave a young child unattended near [water](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240219_NoLifeguardatHome.pdf) and do not trust a child’s life to another child; teach children to always ask permission to go near water.
* Have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets around water, but do not rely on life jackets alone.
* Maintain constant supervision.
* Make sure everyone in your family learns to swim well. Enroll in age-appropriate Red Cross water orientation and learn-to-swim courses.
* If you have a pool, secure it with appropriate barriers. Many children who drown in home pools were out of sight for less than five minutes and in the care of one or both parents at the time.
* Avoid distractions when supervising children around water.
* If a child is missing, check the water first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
* Have appropriate equipment, such as reaching or throwing equipment, a cell phone, life jackets and a first aid kit.
* Know how and when to call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
* Enroll in Red Cross [home pool safety](http://homepoolessentials.org/), [water safety](http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/water-safety), [first aid and CPR/AED](http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/program-highlights/cpr-first-aid) courses to learn how to prevent and respond to emergencies.
* Protect your skin. Limit the amount of direct sunlight you receive between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and wear sunscreen with a protection factor of at least 15.
* Drink plenty of water regularly, even if you’re not thirsty. Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them.



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**Home Pool Safety**

**Maintaining a Safe Environment around Your Home Pool**

Millions of us enjoy warm weather every year by swimming in our backyard pools and relaxing in hot tubs. Tragically though, over 200 young children drown in backyard pools each year. The American Red Cross suggests owners make safety their priority by following these guidelines:

* Secure your pool with appropriate barriers. Completely surround your pool with a 4-feet high fence or barrier with a self-closing, self-latching gate. Place a safety cover on the pool or hot tub when not in use and remove any ladders or steps used for access. Consider installing a pool alarm that goes off if anyone enters the pool.
* Keep children under active supervision at all times. Stay in arm’s reach of young children. Designate a responsible person to watch the water when people are in the pool—never allow anyone to swim alone. Have young or inexperienced swimmers wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
* Ensure everyone in the home knows how to swim well by enrolling them in age-appropriate water orientation and learn-to-swim courses from the Red Cross.
* Keep your pool or hot tub water clean and clear. Maintain proper chemical levels, circulation and filtration. Regularly test and adjust the chemical levels to minimize the risk of earaches, rashes or more serious diseases.
* Establish and enforce rules and safe behaviors, such as “no diving,” “stay away from drain covers,” “swim with a buddy” and “walk please.”
* Ensure everyone in the home knows how to respond to aquatic emergencies by having appropriate safety equipment and taking water safety, first aid and CPR courses from the Red Cross.

The American Red Cross and National Swimming Pool Foundation® have partnered to create an online Home Pool Essentials course that describes steps home pool owners can take to prevent tragedy and keep a well maintained pool or hot tub. The course is available at [www.HomePoolEssentials.org.](http://www.homepoolessentials.org)



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**Beach Safety**

**Sun, Sand and Safety**

Every summer, people pack their bathing suits, sunscreen, flip flops and a good book for a trip to the beach. Or, perhaps where you live, you are fortunate to have beach weather for the greater part of the year. Regardless of how often you get to sink your toes into the sand, the American Red Cross has some steps you can take to be make sure you and your family remain safe.

**Beach Safety**

Swimming in the ocean takes different skills, so before you get your feet wet, it’s best to learn how to swim in the surf. You should also swim only at a lifeguard-protected beach, within the designated swimming area. Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards.

While you’re enjoying the water, keep alert and check the local weather conditions. Make sure you swim sober and that you never swim alone. And even if you’re confident in your swimming skills, make sure you have enough energy to swim back to shore.

**Other tips to keep in mind:**

* Have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets in and the around water. No one should use any other type of floatation device unless they are able to swim.
* Don’t dive headfirst—protect your neck. Check for depth and obstructions before diving, and go in feet first the first time.
* Pay especially close attention to children and elderly persons when at the beach. Even in shallow water, wave action can cause a loss of footing.
* Keep a lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals may be dangerous. Avoid patches of plants. Leave animals alone.



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**Beach Safety - Continued**

**Rip Currents**

Rip currents are responsible for deaths on our nation’s beaches every year, and for most of the rescues performed by lifeguards. Beachgoers should be aware of how dangerous rip currents are, and swim only at beaches with lifeguards in the designated swimming area. Rip currents can form in any large open water area, such as low spots and breaks in sandbars, or near structures such as jetties and piers.

**For your safety, be aware of the danger of rip currents and remember the following:**

* If you are caught in a rip current, stay calm and don’t fight the current.
* Swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Once you are free, turn and swim toward shore.
* If you can't swim to the shore, float or tread water until you are free of the rip current and then head toward shore.
* If you feel you can’t make it to the shore, draw attention to yourself by waving and calling for help.
* Stay at least 100 feet away from piers and jetties. Permanent rip currents often exist near these structures.
* If someone is in trouble in the water, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not available, have someone call 9-1-1.Throw the victim something that floats – a lifejacket, cooler, inflatable ball and yell instructions on how to escape the current.
* When at the beach, check conditions before entering the water. Check to see if any warning flags are up or ask a lifeguard about water conditions, beach conditions, or any potential hazards.



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