

# Water Safety

Keeping children safe while in your care

Water play, as well as visits to playground with water features (e.g lakes, streams, splash pads, or wading pools) are popular activities in the summer.

These activities can pose a drowning hazard to young children. Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death among children ages 1 to 4.

## Understanding the Risks:

- Toddlers and preschoolers are naturally curious about water. They are persistent and resourceful in finding a way to get to it.
- Tragedy can occur quickly, in fact ten seconds of unsupervised play or exploration can result in a drowning. That's all the time it takes!
- It also only takes a few inches of water for a drowning to occur.
- All children are at risk, but children under 5 years of age are at special risk because:
  - They are attracted to water but cannot understand the danger
  - They can walk but they cannot swim
  - They lack balance and coordination which means they can easily fall into bodies of water
  - Their lungs are smaller than adults and fill quickly with water

You can ensure that water play and swimming is as safe as it is fun by following a few basic safety tips.

- **Never leave children unattended around water**

There is no room for compromise on this one. Babies can drown in as little as one inch of water.

- **Give children 100% of your attention when they are near or around water**

Practice active supervision, a combination of staying close, giving full attention, watching, and listening. Whenever young children are in or around water, an adult should be within arm's reach to provide active supervision.



- **Empty all tubs, buckets, containers, and wading pools immediately after use**

Store them upside down and out of children's reach.

- **Don't rely on swimming aids**

Remember that swimming aids such as water wings or noodles are fun toys for kids, but they should never be used in place of a Canadian approved personal flotation device (PFD).

- **Be aware of entrapment hazards**

Pools that pose the greatest risk of entrapment are children's public wading pools, in-ground hot tubs, or any other pools that have flat drain grates or a single main drain system.

- **Ensure that children cannot access backyard pools unsupervised**

Back yard pools need to be securely enclosed (i.e. a 1.2 meter high, four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate).



If you have any questions, contact the Licensing Officer assigned to your facility or visit the Northern Health Website at <http://www.northernhealth.ca/services/community-care-licensing>