



Open Water Safety Checklist

Tips for Families When Visiting Oceans, Lakes and Rivers

- ❑ **Watch kids when they are in or around water, without being distracted.** Keep young children and weak swimmers within arm's reach of an adult. Make sure older children swim with a partner every time.
- ❑ **Choose a Water Watcher.** When there are several adults present, choose one to be responsible for watching children in or near the water for a certain period of time, such as 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, select another adult to be the Water Watcher.
- ❑ **Teach children how to swim.** Every child is different, so enroll children in swim lessons when they are ready – consider their age, development and how often they are around water.
- ❑ **Make sure kids learn water survival skills.** Children should be able to do these five things:
 1. Step or jump into water over their head and return to the surface.
 2. Turn around in the water and orient to safety.
 3. Float or tread water.
 4. Combine breathing with forward movement in the water.
 5. Exit the water.

- **Teach children that swimming in open water is different from swimming in a pool.** Know the hidden hazards of open water such as limited visibility, sudden drop-offs, uneven surfaces, currents and undertow.

- **Use designated swimming areas and recreational areas whenever possible.** Look for posted signs about open water hazards. Also look for signs that say when lifeguards will be present.

- **Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket when boating or participating in other water activities.** Choose a life jacket that is right for your child's weight and water activity. Weak swimmers and children who cannot swim should wear life jackets when they are in or near water.

- **Learn basic water rescue skills and CPR.** It is important to know how to respond in an emergency without putting yourself at risk of drowning.