

# How to stay safe at the pool, lake or beach

by Dr. Delia Chiamonte, [Baltimore Health Examiner](#)



Summer is almost here. Leisurely mornings and lazy afternoons by the pool won't be far behind. These can be joyful and memorable times for the whole family... as long as everyone stays safe.

More than three thousand people die every year from drowning, according to The National Safety Council. Most drowning deaths are preventable. As kids begin their vacations, parents must recommit to making water safety a high summer priority.

Let me share a story with you. When my youngest daughter was three, we were enjoying a lovely vacation day in a hotel pool. My mother was with us and my daughter was standing on the steps in the shallow end, adorable in her inflatable ring. My mom and I were both no more than 2 feet from her. We were discussing something that seemed compelling at the time and we took our eyes off my precious baby. After a moment I looked up to be sure that she was safe.

She wasn't.

Unobserved, she had put the ring around her neck rather than around her waist and stepped off the step into water that was over her head. Her distress was utterly silent. No struggling. No noise. Just a precious child, whose caregivers were within arms reach, whose lungs were about to fill with water.

It was a moment of carelessness that almost changed my life.

Here are some thoughts about how to keep your kids, and yourself, safe around the water:

- If your children cannot swim, glue your eyes to them when they are around water.
- Don't 'half-watch' them as you chat with your friends
- If your children are new swimmers, don't let them swim in the deep end unless you are actively watching them
  - Don't think of 'water wings' or inflatable rings as safety devices. They are toys and may give you or your child a false sense of security
  - Enter the water feet first unless you are absolutely certain that the water is deep enough for diving
  - Never mix alcohol with swimming
  - At the first sign of a storm, get out of the water immediately
  - If you are at a home with a pool, be sure that the pool gate is closed and locked. If a child is missing, check the pool first
  - Teach your children about rip tides and check the conditions before you swim in the ocean. If you get stuck in a rip tide, swim parallel to the shore until you have cleared it
  - Think twice about swimming without a lifeguard
  - Never swim alone

Summer is leisurely and relaxing. That's why we love it so much. The trick is to relax your body, mind and spirit without relaxing your vigilance.

(Photo from free photos bank)

Dr. Chiamonte is a private Health Advocate and the founder of Insight Medical Consultants. She has been quoted by CNN, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today as an expert on patient advocacy.

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