Water Safety: A Parent's Guide

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Levi Hughes and his mother, Nicole, were sharing a brownie one afternoon when Nicole turned away for just a few moments.

In those moments, her three-year-old son wandered to the pool. Nicole still had the brownie in her hand when she jumped in to save him. Unfortunately, it was too late.

Stories like this seem tragic and unusual, but they are more common than you would think. Drowning is the number one cause of injury death among children 1-4 years old and can happen in any family. Babies can drown in as little as one inch of water, and so extra care is needed around any source of water. Most drownings occur in homes. Among children 1-4 years old, 58% of drownings occurred at home, and 27% of drownings occurred at a close friend or relative's house.

Luckily, there are many ways to reduce the risks of drowning.

A mixture of putting in safety features and changing behaviors can increase water safety and decrease the chances of drowning.

Some tips for drowning prevention from the American Academy of Pediatrics are to:

- **Always supervise your children when they are in or near**

water.

- ## Build a fence around your pool.

The best way to prevent a drowning is to install a fence around your pool. The fence should surround all four sides of the pool and be tall enough to prevent climbing. The fence would be away from furniture that kids could use to climb over the fence. And it should be made so that children cannot slip through or climb over it.

- ## Maintain a safe home.

Though children commonly drown in pools, they can also drown in any body of water. Make sure to empty buckets of water, supervise bath time, and never leave a child unattended near a source of water- even if it's for a second. Keep bathroom doors closed at all times, and install a toilet lid locking device or doorknob cover.

- ## Assign a water watcher.

At any event or gathering where a body of water is involved, assign an adult to act as a "water watcher." This person should watch the water and any surrounding areas to make sure that every child is safe. The water watcher should be alert and completely focused on watching the pool. Switch off with other adults so that the water watcher gets breaks.

- **Stay close to your child in the water.**

This concept is commonly known as "touch supervision" and involves staying physically close to your child while they are in the water. It is recommended that an adult is within arm's length of a child in the water, especially for children five years old or younger or for older children who are not comfortable in the water.

- **Have your child take swimming lessons.**

Putting your child in swimming lessons can give children the skills to float and swim. This adds another layer of protection to prevent drowning. Children can take swimming lessons as early as age 1, but the decision to start swimming lessons depends on your child's comfort and abilities.

- **Learn CPR.**

All parents and caregivers should be trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) so that they can provide care in an emergency situation while waiting for professionals to arrive. Having the ability to perform CPR is a good skill to have

and will allow you to create a safer environment for the children in your life.

There are many tips and tricks to prevent drowning in children, and it is up to everyone to work together to decrease the risks.

To learn about more pediatrician-approved ways to prevent drowning, visit healthychildren.org or contact the Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Miami, a program supported by The Children's Trust, at 305-243-9080.

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Heading to the playground?

Playgrounds can be a great place for kids to have fun, exercise and explore, but they are also a very common place for kids to get hurt. Read more.