

How to be safe in and around the water

Always supervise children near water

Always keep watch when children are in and around any water. 1 in 3 drownings of children under 5 happen when a child wanders off unsupervised and falls into water. It only takes a few seconds for a curious child to fall into water and drown.

You or another responsible adult must supervise all the time. It is not sufficient to glance up occasionally whilst you read a book or relax.

Take your child with you whenever you leave the sea or surf, swimming pool or bathtub.

Home safety check list:

- Is your child being supervised?
- Have you emptied the bathtub?
- Is the lid on the nappy bucket?
- Have you made sure that your child cannot gain access to the pool or spa?
- Have you checked for other water dangers such as open drains, garden ponds, creeks or dams?

Only swim between the red and yellow flags at the beach

- On many beaches there are lifeguards and lifesavers who help keep swimmers safe. They usually wear a special uniform. When they are on duty (on patrol), they place flags (red and yellow) on the beach to show swimmers where it is safer to enter the water and to swim or surf.
- Always swim or surf at places patrolled by lifesavers or lifeguards.
- Swim between the red and yellow flags. They mark the safer area for swimming.
- Always swim where there are other people to watch you.
- Read and obey the signs.
- If you don't understand what is written or shown on the signs, ask someone who speaks English to explain the information to you.
- If you are not sure if it is safe to go in the water ask a lifeguard or lifesaver.
- Don't swim directly after a meal.
- Don't swim if you have been drinking alcohol or taking other drugs.
- Never dive into the water without checking the water depth.
- If you get into trouble in the water, stay calm. Signal for help by holding up one arm and waving. Float and wait for assistance.
- Use sunscreen and wear a shirt and hat. Remember to reapply sunscreen after swimming.
- Currents in the sea can sometimes carry you away from the shore. These are called rips and you should keep well away. If you notice a section of water that is running out to sea, looks rippled and is a sandy colour with cleaner water on

either side, this may be a rip. The waves may also be larger and breaking further out to sea on both sides of the rip.

Never swim alone

It is important to always swim with another person. Our ever-changing aquatic environment is unpredictable and if you get into trouble in or near the water, someone else is there to provide or get help.

- Beware of fast-flowing water, submerged objects and deep water.
- Check the conditions. Ask someone who is familiar with the area.
- Look for and read the water safety signs and obey lifeguards/lifesavers' instructions. Ask someone who speaks English to help you understand instructions.
- Check the water depth and temperature before you enter. You can use a pole or stick to check for depth in lakes and rivers.
- Don't stand too close to the edge of rivers or lakes as it may be slippery.
- Never swim following the consumption of alcohol or other drugs.
- If you feel cold in the water, get out as quickly as you can.
- If in trouble, stay calm, wave for help and then float and wait for assistance.
- Take a rope if you are planning a picnic or holiday near water. It could help rescue someone in the water.
- If someone needs help in the water, stay dry. Reach out with a stick or throw a rope.

Fence Swimming Pools

Statistics show half of the children under the age of five that drown, do so in private swimming pools or spas.

- People who own pools must install fencing and a magnetic gate that closes itself. Ensure the gate closes by itself and latches shut. Your local council can give you more information on the type of latch required.
- Never under any circumstances leave the gate open.
- Check to see there is nothing leaning against the fence that would help a child climb over and get into the water.

Learn to swim and survive

There are water familiarisation classes to help children and adults become confident in the water and to introduce them to basic water safety.

Learning to swim is a vital skill for everyone. Ensuring your family receive quality teaching is important – because learning to swim is a skill for life.

However, for children water familiarisation is no substitute for adult supervision. Remember, always keep watch when children are in and around water.

Have lifejackets for all on board

Every year, people die in recreational boating accidents in this State and most were not wearing a personal flotation device (PFD) such as a lifejacket.

- Check your boat thoroughly in all respects before heading out on the water.
- It is important that all safety gear is in good condition and ready for use. Your equipment was designed to help save lives.
- Lifejackets are perhaps the single most important safety item on any boat and there should be one on board for each person. Stow lifejackets where you can reach them in an emergency, and make sure your distress flare has not expired.
- It is recommended that children and poor swimmers wear one at all times when they are on boats.

Take Care when Rock Fishing

A high number of people drown whilst rock fishing.

- Choose the safest possible location, and take time to observe the conditions
- Be aware of the tides and weather. Listen to the weather report on the radio before going out to fish. If the report says that the weather is going to change, it is safer to plan to go fishing on another day
- Never fish alone
- Wear lightweight clothing and a flotation jacket, so that if you're swept off rocks, you are buoyant and your clothes don't drag you down. Also, wear head protection. Evidence suggests that many people who have drowned received some sort of head injury.
- Wear shoes with non-slip soles or cleats. Rock plates or cleats are essential on wet, weedy rocks.
- Always watch the waves.
- Wear a buoyancy vest if you are not a strong swimmer.
- Carry a float and a rope to help if anyone is washed in.