



Summer Water Safety Tips*



According to the Canadian Red Cross, an average of 400 Canadians drown each year. The risk of water-related injury or death when in, on or near water is often underestimated.

BCCPA encourages swimmers, boaters and those who will be near water to think safety when in or around water.

Pools

Backyard pools can provide many hours of summer fun, they can also be dangerous. Owning a backyard pool or hot tub comes with the responsibility of ensuring safe use.

- Install a fence that has a self-closing and self-latching gate; keep the gate closed with restricted access at all times. Note: Many cities and municipalities have bylaws governing the fencing around residential swimming pools.
- Have an action plan including adult supervision, an emergency signal, safety equipment and emergency procedures. Learn CPR and how to recognize and respond to water emergencies and injuries.
- Keep the pool deck clear of toys and debris. Do not use glass containers in the pool area.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs in or around the pool.
- Small on-ground portable or kiddie pools should be emptied and turned over when not in use. Above-ground pools should have the ladder or steps removed when not in use. Keep hot tubs covered when not in use.
- Active adult supervision is of the utmost importance - never leave children unattended. Establish pool rules - these can include: swimming with a buddy, having an adult present at all times; no running in pool area, and areas not to swim near, such as drains or suction outlets. Ensure children wear appropriate flotation devices.
- Enroll children in swimming lessons. Adults who are weak swimmers should also take lessons. Most community pools offer swimming lessons for children and adults of all ages. Contact your local parks and recreation for details.

Open Waters

- Never underestimate the power of currents. Swimming in open water is different than swimming in a pool - distance is deceiving, and one often has to contend with cold water, waves, drop offs, sandbars, undertows, and underwater obstacles, as well as boats and watercrafts.
- If you become caught in a river current or fast moving water, roll onto your back and go downstream feet first to avoid hitting obstacles head first. When you are out of the strongest part of the current, swim straight toward shore.
- If your boat has overturned, hang on to the upstream end of the boat.

Diving

Diving is a popular water activity - the risk of head, neck and spinal cord injury also means diving could be extremely dangerous without proper training and taking appropriate precautions. Diving is the leading sports-related cause of spinal cord injuries. 95% of diving injuries occur in water 1.5m deep or less.

- Whether in familiar or unfamiliar waters, always enter feet-first the first time to be sure of the water depth and be aware of any hazards. Weather conditions can affect the depth of waterways or increase the amount of debris found in the water.
- There are many factors to consider when determining whether or not it is safe to dive: the height, weight and skill level of the diver; length and depth of the diving area; and the height from which the dive will be taken.

In the Boat

- Be prepared. Check weather forecast and water conditions. Carry marine charts. Inspect all equipment before departure. Ventilate all areas where fumes may accumulate.
- Along with a *Pleasure Craft Operator Card*, boaters are required by law to carry marine safety equipment. At minimum, the following should be carried on board your boat:
 - Canadian-approved personal flotation device for each passenger on board
 - Buoyant heaving line at least 15 metres in length
 - Watertight flashlight OR Canadian approved flares
 - Sound-signaling device
 - Manual propelling device (i.e. paddle) OR an anchor with at least 15 metres of rope, chain or cable
 - Bailer OR manual water pump
 - Class 5 BC fire extinguisher
 - Additional safety equipment may apply depending on the type and length of your boat. Visit Transport Canada's Office of Boating Safety for additional information at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-menu-1362.htm>
- Operate your boat at a safe speed. Consider factors such as: visibility conditions; wind and water conditions; the maneuverability of your boat; other users in the water and the effects a boat's wake may create; hazards such as rocks, logs or tree stumps.
- Do not cruise with alcohol. Drinking and driving whether on land or water, is illegal and punishable by law.

* Adapted from resources found at www.redcross.ca and Transport Canada