



**American Red Cross**  
Greater Houston Area Chapter

## ***WATER SAFETY TIPS***

The Greater Houston Area Chapter of the American Red Cross reminds families to follow these safety tips for staying healthy and safe in or around the water:

- **Learn to swim and swim well.** One of the best things anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is learn to swim. No one, including adults should ever swim alone. Adults should practice “reach supervision” which means to be within arm’s length of a child in case an emergency occurs.
- **Outfit everyone with the proper gear.** Kids – and even adults – who are not strong swimmers or who appear to rely on inflatable toys for safety should use U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) whenever they are in or around the water. Everyone, including strong swimmers, should use an approved PFD when boating. When used properly, this lightweight plastic equipment can help save lives.
- **Always keep basic lifesaving equipment by the residential pool and know how to use it.** A first aid kit, cordless phone, phone list with emergency contact information, reaching pole and ring buoy with a line attached are recommended. First aid kits should contain plastic face shields, which can help prevent disease transmission. Plastic ring buoys are a good idea; because of their maneuverability even a child can use one if the need arises. In addition, the Red Cross recommends that pools be surrounded on all sides by a fence that is at least four feet high. It should not provide any footholds, which would allow a child to climb over or spacing to climb through. The fence should have a self-closing, self-locking gate locks when the pool is not in use.
- **Swim in supervised areas only.**
- **Obey "No Diving" signs.**
- **Watch out for the "dangerous too's."** Take a break at the point of being too tired, too cold, or too far from safety, too much sun, too little hydration, too much strenuous activity.
- **Don't mix alcohol and swimming.** Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills and reduces your body's ability to stay warm.
- **Pack a “safety” bag for a day at the beach or lake.** Water-proof sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher, water shoes to keep feet safe from the heat and sharp objects on land and plenty of water are musts. All containers should be plastic to prevent injuries from breaking glass. Also, a hat and sunglasses keep eyes safe from dangerous UV rays. At the beach, don't swim in areas that say “no swimming”...such as along jettys and piers. Pay attention to warning flags that tell you when the current is dangerous. When possible, swim where there is a lifeguard.
- **Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts.** Stop swimming at the first indication of bad weather.
- **Learn Red Cross first aid and CPR.** While the above tips can help prevent emergencies, it is important to know what to do if a situation arises. And all caregivers, including grandparents, older siblings and babysitters should have these lifesaving skills.
- **If someone is in distress in the water,** don't go in after them. Find something to extend to them...a towel, oar, etc and pull them in to safety.

**For more information on preparing for any emergency, visit [www.houstonredcross.org](http://www.houstonredcross.org) or contact the Greater Houston Area, American Red Cross chapter at 713-526-8300.**