

checklist of actions to take upon your arrival for a safe vacation

Because many injuries and drownings occur on the very first day, even the first hours of a vacation, do the following quick safety check immediately to give your vacation the best possible start.

- ❑ **One adult should inspect the location for hazards, while another supervises the children**
It is not uncommon for a drowning to occur while both adults are busy unloading the car or unpacking upon arrival. Take a walk around the site first and anticipate where risks may occur. Make sure you are informed about any hidden risks such as nearby open wells or reservoirs, especially in rural settings where your children can roam freely.
- ❑ **Set up your vacation home to reduce drowning hazards**
Empty buckets and store them where they cannot collect water, remove the stopper from the bath tub so children cannot fill the tub, keep doors locked if there is immediate water access nearby. Locate first aid equipment and PFDs and keep them in a handy spot near the water.
- ❑ **Check the pool depths**
Walk around the pool to ensure the markings are accurate and the water level full. Clear the pool of any toys or floats. Before the first swim, show all swimmers the safe wading and diving areas (1.8 metres).
- ❑ **Locate the telephone and put the emergency numbers next to the phone with directions to the property**
If an emergency happens, having all the information ready can help reduce stress and save a life.
- ❑ **Familiarise yourself with pool safety features**
If there is a fence and gate, show older children how to properly close it to protect younger children. If there is an alarm or pool cover, learn how to use it immediately and use it consistently, but do not let these features replace your constant supervision.
- ❑ **Familiarise yourself with the flags that are used on the beach**
The meaning of the flags are not the same in each country, ensure you know what they mean as they can identify dangerous situations.
- ❑ **Explain the rules for using the vacation property to your children along with the four water safety rules**
Once you have inspected your vacation property and have put your safety measures in place, tell your children what the rules are for this vacation, so the risk of injury can be reduced. Specifically remember the four water safety rules:
 1. Never swim alone.
 2. Do not dive into unknown bodies of water, always enter water feet first.
 3. Do not push, dunk or jump on others.
 4. Know where to get help in case of an emergency.



Be aware of the different risks for different age groups.

Toddlers and young children are more likely to drown or be injured in residential waters such as pools, tubs, or garden ponds or wells, while most teens drown or are injured in un-supervised open water such as beaches, rivers or lagoons where they have under-estimated the risks or are unfamiliar with hazards such as strong tides or hidden rocks.

If a child is missing, always check the water first, including under pool covers. Every minute counts with a drowning.

If your teens wish to explore beaches and open waters without you, urge them to swim in supervised areas when possible (where a lifeguard is present) or ask a local person about both safe and hazardous nearby swim spots.

after your vacation

Let the travel agency or rental owner know if the location met your family's safety needs. Whether your report is good or bad it is important to let service providers know if the location was water wise, as other families will be staying there as well, and many providers might simply be unaware of risks and will gladly make improvements.

Make mental notes for yourself of what worked and did not work for the safety of your children so you can be better prepared for next time. You and your family will go on many vacations and it is important to learn through each experience so you can minimise injury risk and maximise your own relaxation.

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