

Water Recreation: Play It Safe & Healthy

Water play can provide hours of recreation for families. However, we all need to play it safe when taking part in activities involving water. Drowning kills more than 1,000 children ages 14 and under each year. For every child who drowns, another 20 go to the hospital or emergency room after nearly drowning. In addition to drowning, swimming and playing in contaminated water can cause illness.

Water Safety at Home

- ◆ If you have or use a pool, watch children under age 12 at all times. Make sure they walk – not run – on the pool deck.
- ◆ Surround all pools, hot tubs, and spas with a fence at least 5 feet high. The fence should have a self-closing, self-latching gate. It's important that the fence is one that children cannot climb. Don't think of your home as part of the fence, because children can open doors to get to a pool.
- ◆ Take all toys out of the pool area after swimming so children won't go back into the water and play by themselves.
- ◆ Never leave a young child alone in the bathtub. Children can drown in only a couple of inches of water.



Outdoor Water Recreation

In Kentucky, there are more than 89,000 miles of rivers and streams. Lakes and reservoirs are also plentiful and provide an exciting destination for warm weather recreation. However, we all need to follow a few basic safety tips to enjoy our water resources.

- ◆ Children should wear life jackets while on docks, boats, or at beaches or rivers. Never let children swim alone.
- ◆ Boat engines give off dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide. Avoid swimming, rafting, surfing, or skiing too close to a boat engine. Be cautious when boats are parked in groups or idling near each other.
- ◆ Be sure to follow any swim advisories issued for local streams, rivers, or lakes.

Understanding Swim Advisories

Each year, the Kentucky Division of Water and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services issues necessary swim advisories for the state. A swim advisory indicates that people should avoid swimming and other recreational contact with water. Swim advisories are most often issued because of the presence of high levels of fecal coliform bacteria, which is found in human and animal waste. The bacteria indicate that organisms that can cause infectious disease may be present in the water. To find out if a swim advisory is in effect in your area, contact your local health department or the Kentucky Division of Water at (502)564-3410 or online at www.water.ky.gov.



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References:

Healthy Homes Partnership. "Help Yourself to a Healthy Home." ©2002. Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.
 Kentucky Division of Water. "Swim Advisories in Kentucky." 2004. Accessed online at <http://www.water.ky.gov/sw/advisories/swim.htm>