FACTS ON...
Water Play, The Safe Way

When swimming or playing near water with children, it is important for families to always keep safety in mind. Consider the following facts:

- Drowning is the second most common cause of injury death for children aged 0-14 in Atlantic Canada.*
- For every toddler who drowns, three to five more children have a near drowning where they have to be admitted to the hospital.
- In Atlantic Canada, 50% of drownings occur in swimming pools and 44% in open bodies of water like oceans, lakes or streams.*
- The most common age groups to be hospitalized from drowning in swimming pools are ages 0-4 and 10-14 years.*

Why are children at risk for drowning?

UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE

All children are at risk, but young children under five years of age are at special risk because:

- They are attracted to water but cannot understand the danger.
- They can walk but they cannot swim.
- Their lungs are smaller than adults and can fill quickly with water.
- They can drown in as little as 2.5 cm of water.

5 TO 14 YEARS OF AGE

- Older children are at risk because they may overestimate their own skills, underestimate the depth of the water or strength of the current, or respond to a dare from a friend.
- Physical strength develops throughout childhood. Even a good swimmer can get into trouble, especially in unfamiliar water or environments.

Child Safety Link would like to share the following age-specific tips on how to keep your family safe while they are enjoying water activities:

For children under 5 years and non-swimmers

- Children under 5, and non-swimmers of all ages should always be within arm’s reach of a supervising adult.
- Children under 5 and non-swimmers should always wear life jackets when they are in, on, or around the water.

(continued on next page)

*These statistics appear in the Child & Youth Unintentional Injury in Atlantic Canada: 10 Years in Review (ACIP, Safe Kids Canada).

For more information on children’s injury prevention topics, visit www.childsafetylink.ca or call 1-866-288-1388 (toll-free in the Maritimes)

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### For children under 5 years and non-swimmers
- Swimming lessons for toddlers and young children should focus on introducing them to the water and water safety rules. Small children do not have the physical skills to perform swimming strokes on their own.
- Children aged 1-4 are most likely to drown in a backyard pool. Make sure your backyard pool has at least a 1.2 meter high, four-sided fence around it.

### For children aged 5-14 years
- Children five years of age and older can begin to learn swimming strokes and water skills. However, even if they are in swimming lessons, kids still need to be watched when in and around the water because:
  - Kids don’t know their limits. They can overestimate their skills and underestimate their environments like water depth or strength of current.
  - Older children may accept dares or bets to challenge their own or other kids’ swimming abilities.

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### Parents and caregivers should following these water safety guidelines, designed to keep children of all ages safe in and around water:

- Actively supervise all children in and around all types of water, staying within direct sight and arm's reach when they are in or near any water (i.e. pools, lakes, rivers, ocean). Small children must never be left alone in the bathtub. Ninety per cent of all shallow water drownings occur when the adult is absent.

- Get trained in water skills, swimming skills, CPR and first aid. If your child gets into trouble while you are supervising, these types of training could help save his or her life.

- Put down your electronic devices: listening is not enough to prevent drowning. Most drownings are silent and can occur in just a few seconds. Actively supervise ALL children while in or near the water, including those who are taking swimming lessons.

- Make sure your pool is properly fenced. Almost half of all child drownings happen in backyard pools; 7 out of 10 deaths can be prevented with proper barrier fencing.

- Enroll your kids in swimming lessons. Only 3% of children who drowned in Canada from 2001 – 2010 were identified as strong swimmers.

- Ensure that everyone in your family always wears a lifejacket when riding in any type of boat. Make it a family habit, like wearing a seatbelt in a car. Eighty-seven per cent of Canadians who drown are either not wearing a lifejacket or do not have it secured properly.