

WATER SAFETY AROUND OPEN WATER



Water play is fun and people, especially children, are attracted to areas of water, wherever they find them. Open water environments present a range of potential hazards, however following some simple, sensible precautions will ensure that you and your family play safely.

Understand how open water is different

Open water is:

- Usually unfenced 'open' to access from multiple points
- Unpredictable
 - bottoms can be uneven or potholed
 - banks can be crumbly or slippery
 - they can contain snags, weeds and other hidden objects
- Rapidly changeable
 - tides can quickly make conditions unsafe
 - weather variations can increase hazards

Supervision is the key to safety

If you are the adult in charge of children, you are responsible for their safety. If you need to divert your attention, you must either ensure that another adult takes over the supervision or that the children leave the water immediately. In situations in which children in the water are not reachable from the shore, you must be in the water with them – within arm's reach if possible.

Children love to play, so join in their activities, they will like your participation and you will find it easier to keep an eye on them.

If there are more than one or two children, remember a regular head count will ensure you are not distracted and no one is missing.

Specific open water tips

Rivers or lakes

- Don't swim around boats or near boat ramps – a swimmer's head is hard for boat drivers to see

- Never jump or dive into unclear water, it may be shallow with hidden rocks or branches
- Always walk in feet first, the bottom can be muddy, soft and uneven
- Take care around the banks, they may be slippery or unstable
- Don't panic if your legs become tangled in weeds, swim or walk calmly towards safety

Boating

- Always wear your life jacket and follow safety rules
- Always be within easy reach of something to hold on to
- Don't distract the driver or person steering the boat
- Do whatever the person in charge asks you to do, quickly and safely

At the beach

Playing at the beach is a wonderful way to spend the day, however there are hazards to be aware of - keep safe by following these simple steps:

- Discuss your trip to the beach as a family and decide on your safety rules, limits and boundaries
- Always swim between the flags as this is the safest place on the beach and is patrolled by trained lifeguards
- If there are no flags, do not enter the water at all unless you are confident conditions are safe
- Choose a spot to meet, should any family members become separated
- Be careful playing around rocks and sand dunes
- Remember to be sun smart; Slip on a shirt, Slap on a hat, Slop on some sunscreen
- Spend time in the shade with a safe beach shelter
- Stay hydrated - remember to take water bottles and refill from the nearest tap
- Boogie boards and fins go hand in hand, use them together and always use safety straps
- Be very careful with inflatable beach toys. They can rapidly deflate – and stop providing support. They can also rapidly blow away, with or without passengers.

We would like to thank; Kidsafe, Royal Life Saving Society, Kidsafe Victoria and splashmagazine.com.au for data used in these information sheets.