Water Safety Talking Points

Water is an essential part of life and can provide endless fun and recreation. However, it can also pose significant risks, especially to young children. With careful planning and consistent safety practices, many water-related injuries and tragedies can be prevented.

Children should never be left unsupervised around any body of water, including pools, lakes, bathtubs, and even buckets. Drowning can happen quickly and silently, often in just seconds. Adults should always remain within arm's reach of young children and avoid distractions such as cell phones, conversations, or reading while supervising.

Teaching children about water safety from an early age is crucial. They should understand the importance of staying away from deep water unless accompanied by an adult, and they should be taught to ask for permission before entering any body of water.

Enrolling children in age-appropriate swimming lessons can significantly reduce the risk of drowning. Knowing how to swim is a life-saving skill, and swimming courses also build children's confidence and familiarity with water.

Parents and caregivers should learn CPR and basic rescue techniques so they can respond effectively in case of an emergency. Having this knowledge can be the difference between life and death.

All caregivers should be educated about water safety guidelines, especially if they are responsible for supervising children. Clear communication and safety rules can help prevent accidents.

After use, always empty baby pools, bathtubs, and containers that can collect water to prevent unsupervised access. Young children can drown in just a few inches of water.

Installing pool covers and pool alarms provides an additional layer of protection. These safety tools can alert you if someone enters the pool area unexpectedly.

Rescue equipment such as life rings, poles, and a phone for emergencies should be kept nearby and easily accessible at all times.

In homes with toddlers, keep toilet lids closed and use safety latches. Children are naturally curious and may attempt to play in or around toilets.

When near open water such as lakes or rivers, everyone—especially children—should wear a properly fitted, US Coast Guard Approved life jacket. Even strong swimmers can face difficulties in open water.

During winter months, stay off frozen bodies of water like lakes and ponds. Ice can be unpredictable and dangerously thin, posing a serious risk of falling through.

Teach children how to call 911 and explain when it is appropriate to do so. In an emergency, knowing how to get help quickly is critical.

Avoid leaving pool toys in the water, as they can attract children who may try to retrieve them without adult supervision.

Remember, lifeguards are not babysitters. Even at guarded facilities, it is still the responsibility of parents and caregivers to watch their children closely.

Never allow diving into unfamiliar or shallow water. Hidden objects or shallow depths can cause serious injuries or even paralysis.

If you own an above-ground pool, remove ladders and secure the area when not in use. This prevents children from accessing the pool unsupervised.

Lastly, make sure your hot water heater is set below 120° F to prevent burns, especially when bathing children.

Statistics:

- **Drowning is the #1 cause of accidental death for children aged 1–4** in the U.S.; among 5–14-year-olds, it's the **2nd leading cause** after car accidents .
- About **11 children (aged 1–4) die daily** from unintentional drowning, and **22 non-fatal drowning incidents** occur each day .
- Children under five mostly drown in **home pools or hot tubs**—about **87%** of fatalities happen there .

Internet Safety Talking Points

The internet is a powerful and useful tool that allows us to connect, learn, and explore in ways never before possible. It helps us stay informed about news, sports, and entertainment and makes it easy to communicate with friends and colleagues. However, with these benefits come risks—particularly for children.

According to research, 1 in 5 children has received some form of online enticement. This includes predators attempting to engage children in inappropriate conversations or luring them into dangerous situations. That's why it is critical to educate both ourselves and our children about safe online behavior.

Parents and caregivers should stay informed about current internet trends, including new apps, terminology, and potential dangers. Technology evolves rapidly, and so do the tactics used by those looking to exploit children. Knowing what your children are using and how those platforms work is a key step in protecting them.

It is important to understand that any device capable of connecting to the internet—whether it be a smartphone, tablet, gaming console, computer, or smartwatch—can provide access to both positive and harmful content. Keep these devices in common areas of the home and avoid allowing unsupervised usage in private spaces.

Children should be taught to never share personal information online. This includes their full name, home address, phone number, school name, sports team, birthdate, or any other identifying information. This type of data can be used by predators to track or contact them.

Use parental controls and security software to help manage what your child can access online. These tools are not foolproof but can provide a first line of defense. Regularly checking browser history and setting clear boundaries for internet use are also effective strategies.

Establish times when the internet is turned off or devices are put away, such as during meals or overnight. Limiting screen time helps reduce exposure to potential risks and encourages face-to-face communication.

Make it clear to children that nothing shared online is ever truly private. Images, videos, and messages can be copied, saved, or shared without their permission, often with long-term consequences. Talk to them about the risks of sexting and explain the concept of 'sextortion,' where someone may threaten to release private content unless demands are met.

Not every child is ready for social media. Assess your child's maturity level and understanding of risks before allowing them to create profiles. If you do allow access, help them set up accounts with strong privacy settings and monitor their activity regularly.

Open communication is key. Talk to your children regularly about how they use the internet, what sites or games they enjoy, and who they interact with online. Create a safe space where they feel comfortable sharing concerns or reporting anything suspicious.

Statistics:

In 2023, NCMEC received 36.2 million CyberTipline reports, encompassing over 105 million files (images, videos, other materials) [parents.com+15ncmec.org+15ncmec.org+15](parents.com).

In 2024, reports dropped to 20.5 million, but correspond to 29.2 million distinct incidents, revealing a substantial 43% decrease compared to the prior year [thorn.org+1ncmec.org+1](thorn.org).

Files in 2024 included:

- 33.1 million videos
- 28 million images
- 1.9 million other file types

Reports of **online enticement** (including sextortion) rose from **44,155** in 2021 to **186,819** in 2023—a surge of over **300%.**

Resources:

- Sextortion Information: www.missingkids.org/blog/2021/sextortion-what-parents-should-know
- Child Sex Trafficking: www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking
- National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: www.missingkids.org
- Cyber Tipline: www.netsmartz.org
- Internet Safety Guides: www.missingkids.org/netzsmart/resources
- Kids Internet Safety: http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/net_safety.html
- Wiki-How Internet Safety Guide: http://www.wikihow.com/Be-Safe-on-the-Internet
- Indiana ICAC Task Force: https://www.in.gov/isp/icactf