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Prevent Needless Deaths

Facts on water safety for children

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 in the Tampa Bay region. In fact, over the last five years, more than 40 children under the age of 6 have died from drowning in our area. Six of those deaths occurred in 2016.

The facts on children and accidental drownings:

- Drowning can happen to any child, anywhere and anytime – not just pools, ponds or beaches. Infants and toddlers can drown in as little as one inch of water, and it is especially hazardous if they have not yet developed neck muscle control. Drowning hazards for young children include pet water bowls, buckets, toilets, blow-up pools and bathtubs.
- The main reason children drown is because of lack of supervision in and around water.
- A child can drown in as little as 20 seconds, and young children often drown silently – the only sound will be the small splash as the child enters the water.
- Two-thirds of small kids who drowned in a pool were last seen in the house.

Water safety tips for parents and caregivers:

- *Stay alert.* Since children drown silently, they do not splash or call out for help. This makes it even easier for a drowning child to go unnoticed, so stay alert.
- *Designate a “water watcher.”* Assign an adult to keep their eyes on the child at all times when they are near water. The watcher should avoid distraction, especially by phone calls, texting or other electronic devices.
- *Be within arm’s reach.* When infants and toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm’s reach, and close enough to rescue the child if needed.
- *Never rely on floatation devices.* Flotation devices, such as water wings, inner tubes or even life vests should be used only in conjunction with close adult supervision.
- *Enclose your pool so children can’t access it.* Be sure your pool and any pool your child visits follows all legal requirements for barriers and locks. All pools should have isolation fencing with self-closing, self-latching locks that are out of reach from small children.
- *Get swim lessons.* Take advantage of programs that offer swim lessons.
- *Be aware of hidden hazards.* Empty bathtubs, buckets and inflatable pools when they are no longer in use. Keep pet bowls out of reach from children and bathroom doors closed.

Prevent Needless Deaths is an awareness campaign made possible by the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County, Eckerd Kids and the Florida Department of Children and Families.