Water Safety This Summer

Water Safety Guidelines this Summer

As we move out of lockdown more and more people are taking to the beaches and lakes for day trips and stay-cations. However, whilst it is fun to take a dip in the water, it is vital stay safe at all times. An average of 120 drownings occur in Ireland every year, the vast majority of which are men. In the past 10 years 30 children aged 14 and under have drowned in Ireland (https://watersafety.ie/statistics/). Read our water safety tips so that wherever you go this summer, be it the lake, beach or pool, you will be able to enjoy yourself in the water without the fear of accidents or casualties.

Always supervise your child

Children should always be supervised in the water. It may be tempting to think that they will be safe if they're wearing a rubber ring or armbands but you should never rely on a buoyancy aid or inflatables. As a Leisure Centre Manager I have witnessed these dangers first-hand many times. I have seen children jumping into pools and armbands slipping off, I have often observed inflatables tip and children struggle to right themselves, these things can be very dangerous.



Always ensure you are in the water, within reaching distance. However, it's not just in swimming pools, beaches, lakes and rivers that children require supervision. You should never leave them unattended in baths or paddling pools and always oversee with any form of water play.

Swimming/paddling pools

Swimming pools have various depths and it can be easy to misjudge where the

shallow end stops and the deep end suddenly starts. Before you use any pool for the first time ensure you know the pool depths. If there is no signage then ask the lifeguard or supervisor. Drowning can happen extremely quickly and usually silently, without any obvious signs of a struggle. Furthermore, a child can drown in just 2 cm of water, which is barely deeper than some puddles and significantly shallower than the average paddling pool.

Teach your child basic swim safety

Start teaching your children to recognise and observe water safety signs such as no diving, no swimming or deep water as early as possible. Signs and rules are there to protect you. Also, teach them to always follow the guidance given by lifeguards at pools and indicated by flags at the beach. Speak to your children about staying safe in ponds, rivers, lakes and the beach and always prevent them from diving into any unknown depths. These basic lessons can be real life savers.

In addition to this I would urge all parents to teach children to swim from an early age as this really is an essential lifesaving skill.

Water safety guidelines for older children, teenagers and adults

Adventurous water sports such as kayaking and surfing are increasingly popular during the summer break. Riskier activities such as diving into the sea from cliffs or tomb-stoning often happen in the holidays and pose many risks.

Tomb-stoning is the act of jumping in a straight, upright vertical posture into the sea or other water from a high jumping platform, such as a cliff, bridge or harbor edge. Tomb-stoning and cliff jumping is particularly dangerous as water depth can be unpredictable as it changes with the tide.

Water can often be shallower than it appears from above. Water can also be murky hiding hazards such as rocks or sharp objects. This is a high-risk activity which has resulted in fatalities or injuries, such a spinal and limb injuries. As parents it is important to educate children on these dangers to make them far more risk aware and more sensible and cautious when approaching these dangerous activities.

Currents are one of the greatest hazards to all beach goers. They can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea but are particularly dangerous for weak and non-swimmers.

Whilst hot summer sun can make a cooling dip tempting, the sudden change in temperatures from hot to cold can make it difficult to swim. **Cold water shock** triggers the fight and fright response when someone enters cold water. Cold water shock causes panic and this can lead to drowning.

Open water swimming can be extremely dangerous without suitable training, equipment and supervision. Open water is cold, it can be difficult to find an easy place to get out of the water and there are hidden dangers such as weeds and debris beneath the surface that you can easily get caught up in and can pull you under. Even the most confident of swimmers can come across difficulties in open water. If you are planning on swimming in open water always have someone with you, don't swim alone.

How you can help if you think someone is drowning

- Dial 112/999.
- Never put yourself in danger, always think of your own safety first.
- Throw a buoyancy aid to them, and only go in if you have been trained how to help someone.
- A drowning and panicking casualty can quickly pull you under making two casualties.
- If the rescue is too dangerous, wait until the emergency services arrive.

Donegal Safety Services Ltd offers this information for guidance and it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. Donegal Safety Services Ltd is not

responsible or liable for any diagnosis made, or actions taken based on this information. It is strongly advised that you attend a First Aid course to gain an understanding of what to do in a medical emergency.

To view our full range of First Aid Courses press here.