

Experts offer diving safety tips

12 July 2015



Unsafe practices can lead to serious neck and spine injuries.

(HealthDay)—It's tempting to dive into pools, lakes and other bodies of water when you're trying to cool off on a hot summer day, but it can be dangerous if you don't take proper safety precautions, experts warn.

Each year, hundreds of people in the United States are paralyzed from neck and [spine](#) injuries suffered after diving head-first into shallow lakes and pools, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), the American Spine Injury Association and the Cervical Spine Research Society.

"Everyone needs to be trained to [dive](#) safely," AAOS spokesperson and orthopedic surgeon Dr. Brett Taylor, said in a news release from the group. "Safe diving skills don't come naturally, they have to be learned. With neck and [spine injuries](#) being the most common diving injuries, a good rule of thumb for divers is to dive feet first in unknown [water](#)."

Never dive into [shallow water](#), the experts advised. Before diving, always check the depth of the water and make sure it is deep enough for diving. If you're diving from a high point, make sure the bottom of the body of water is double the distance from which you're diving.

Never dive into above-ground pools or into water that is unclear, such as a lake or ocean, where you can't see sand bars or objects below the surface, the experts cautioned.

Only one person at a time should stand on a diving board. Dive only off the end of the board and do not run on the board. Do not bounce more than once, because the rebound effect could knock you off your legs or throw you off balance.

After diving, immediately swim away from the area of the diving board to clear the way for the next diver.

Don't body surf near the shore. Doing so puts you at risk for neck injuries, as well as shoulder dislocations and fractures.

More information: Safe Kids Worldwide has more about [water safety](#).

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APA citation: Experts offer diving safety tips (2015, July 12) retrieved 24 June 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-07-experts-safety.html>

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