

# Hundreds of young kids drown in pools each year—keep yours safe

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(HealthDay)—Summer at the nation's swimming pools and hot tubs means fun for kids, but danger, too.

The latest national data, for 2016, finds 389 U.S. youngsters under the age of 15 drowned in [pools](#) and [hot tubs](#) that year.

Most of the deaths (74%) involved children under age 5, the researchers found.

The new report "indicates a spike in [drowning](#) incidents among all children younger than 15," noted Nikki Fleming, who is leader of the *Pool Safely* campaign, sponsored by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. "These numbers demonstrate that drowning remains the leading cause of unintentional death among children ages 1-4, and the second leading cause of death among children ages 5-14." Fleming warned.

Although the months of May through August are

peak time for drownings, the month of June is the most dangerous month of the year for kids losing their lives in this way, Fleming said. About three-quarters of all drownings in pools or spas (such as hot tubs and Jacuzzis) happen at home.

In addition to drownings, the years 2016 through 2018 saw about 6,600 [emergency room visits](#) related to pool or spa injuries annually.

And the CPSC highlighted one particular pool hazard: "suction entrapment." That's when children become trapped on a suction outlet cover in a public pool or spa. In the past, dozens of children drowned each year after becoming entangled in pool drains.

Luckily, there's good news to report on these incidents: "Since the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act went into effect in December 2008, there have been no reported fatalities involving a child being entrapped on a suction outlet cover in a public pool or spa," Fleming noted.

That safety legislation was named after Virginia Graeme Baker, the granddaughter of former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker. She died at the age of 7 in a pool suction entrapment accident in 2002.

The Act mandates that pools now have specially designed drain covers and other devices aimed at preventing suction entrapments.

Dr. Robert Glatter is an emergency physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. He offered the following tips to parents on how to keep children water-safe this summer:

- **Have kids learn to swim.** "Taking swimming lessons at a young age is one of the most important measures to safeguard against potential drowning," Glatter said.

Lessons can begin as early as the age of 1, and should include "water competency" skills associated with getting out of the water if a child falls in unexpectedly.

- **At pools or beaches, give kids your "undivided attention."** "This means putting your smartphone away," Glatter said, because even a few moments of distraction while children are in shallow water—even under a few inches—could prove lethal.
- **Stay close.** If infants or young [children](#) are in the water, an adult who can swim should always be nearby, ideally within an arm's length of the child.
- **Make home pools or spas "child-safe."** For home pools, this "must include a four-sided fence (at least 4 feet high) with a lock that completely surrounds and isolates the pool," Glatter explained. "A 'pool alarm' may also be helpful, signaling when someone has entered the water."

**More information:** The American Red Cross offers more information on [pool safety](#).

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