

Backyard Swimming Pools

PREVENTING CHILD DROWNING

On average two Australian children drown every week. Most are under 5 years of age and of these, about half drown in domestic swimming pools. The children at greatest risk are toddlers, aged 1 – 3, and for them, drowning is the single most common cause of death.

Simple measures would prevent these deaths.

BASIC SAFETY AND BACKYARD POOLS

To reduce preschool drownings, Kidsafe is emphasising three aspects of pool safety:

1. TAKE PRECAUTIONS

The most important precaution is a **safety fence completely isolating the pool**. The fence should conform to the Australian Standard (AS 1926), have a self closing and self latching gate, be well maintained, and have nothing nearby a child could use to climb over it including trees and shrubs.

2. ALWAYS WATCH CHILDREN NEAR WATER

Children, particularly toddlers, are attracted to water. They have no fear and little ability to look after themselves in the water and can therefore drown quickly and silently. Therefore children need constant attention when they are near water.

3. KNOW WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY.

The first few minutes are vital and may make a difference between life and death. Therefore, it is important that those with backyard pools know basic resuscitation techniques and how to deal with an emergency.

In addition to these simple steps, teaching children **basic water awareness and water safety** is essential. Schools and AUSTSWIM organises courses. Just

because the major danger is to young children, older children are NOT automatically safe.

APPROPRIATE FENCING

State/Territory and Local Governments often have requirements for fencing pools. Householders should check with these authorities about requirements in their area. As a minimum safe standard, Kidsafe recommends that fencing should:

- Completely isolate the pool from other areas.
- Conform to Australian Standard 1926:
 - 1.2m high
 - Self closing/self latching child resistant gate
 - Resist to climbing
 - Vertical members no more than 100mm apart
 - Horizontal members at least 900mm apart
- Not obscure a view of the pool.

Gates should be maintained to ensure they close properly and they should not be propped open. Nothing should be near the fence that a child could use or move to climb the fence or gate.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

Courses in basic resuscitation techniques are available in our state from:

Royal Life Saving Society
Red Cross
St John Ambulance

IN AN EMERGENCY

Take the child to the phone. Ring the Ambulance Service on 000 (everywhere). The trained operator will give emergency instructions over the phone.