

# Emergency Department Nurses Offer Water Safety Tips

(NAPSA)—When warm weather beckons you and your family to the pool, lake, or beach, heed these safety tips offered by the Emergency Nurses Association's Institute for Injury Prevention/ Emergency Nurses CARE®.

There were 3,482 unintentional drownings in the United States in 2000, an average of nine people per day, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). And for every person who drowns, four more nearly drown. The best thing you can do to stay safe around water is learn to swim. The American Red Cross offers swimming courses for people of all ages and abilities, or check with your local park district for classes.

Review these general water safety tips with your family:

- Whether you're at the pool or the beach, always swim with a buddy.
- Wear sunscreen, eye protection, and foot protection.
- Swim in supervised areas with trained lifeguards. Even skilled swimmers can have an unexpected medical emergency in the water.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Insist that babysitters and grandparents who watch your children know CPR, too.
- Make sure water is deep enough before diving. Serious head and spinal injuries can occur in water that's too shallow for diving.
- Alcohol and water sports



don't mix—ever. Alcohol impairs judgment, balance, and coordination. More than 50 percent of drownings in boating incidents involve alcohol.

Take a boating safety course; in a recent Emergency Nurses Association study, 64 percent of those injured in a personal watercraft or motorboat accident had not taken a boating safety course. Wisely, though, 94 percent of them were wearing a personal flotation device (PFD), or life jacket. Check with your local Coast Guard Auxiliary or American Red Cross office for boating courses.

Develop a "float plan." Anytime you go out in a boat, tell a responsible person where you're going and how long you expect to be gone. If you become lost or delayed because of an emergency, someone will be able to reach you. Watch the weather, and get back to shore if a storm builds. Water conducts electricity, so stay away from water if you see or hear a storm.

Teak surfing, also called drag surfing, is a dangerous new sport,

according to the United States Coast Guard. "Surfers" hold onto the swim platform at the back of a slowly moving boat. After a wake builds up, they let go of the platform and body surf the wake. This puts them directly in the path of the boat's exhaust, where they breathe in dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. "Surfers" can also be severely injured by a spinning boat propeller. Because PFDs restrict the movements of teak surfers, they don't wear them. So "surfers" who are now faint, dizzy or short of breath from carbon monoxide exposure are also at serious risk of drowning.

If you use a personal watercraft (PWC) or jet ski, operate it with courtesy and common sense. Obey speed zones and use extreme caution around swimmers. Avoid passing too closely to other craft, and don't jump wakes. Ride with a buddy and don't use alcohol. For the same reasons that driving a car under the influence is dangerous, you should not operate a boat or PWC while drinking alcohol.

Never leave children unattended in your home pool—keep your eyes on all children at all times. Drowning is the second-leading cause of injury-related death in children under the age of 15. Don't rely on flotation devices or inflatable toys to keep a child afloat. They can lose air or shift position, leaving a child unprotected. Keep a cordless phone nearby in case you need to call for help in an emergency.