Water safety: pools, beaches and the sea

Drowning can happen within minutes and is often silent, in a home pool as easily as at the beach. This page helps families set up barriers and skills in advance, stay safe in the water, and respond correctly when someone gets into trouble.

CHECKLIST

- [ ] Life jackets for children
- [ ] Swim ring or float
- [ ] Throw rope tied to a float, or a long reaching pole
- [ ] Dry clothes and blankets
- [ ] Charged phone to call emergency services hands free
- [ ] Hat, cover-up and sunscreen
- [ ] Plenty of fluids to drink
- [ ] Written list of emergency numbers

BEFORE

- Put a safe fence around home pools and lock doors that lead to the pool.
- Give pool fencing gates that close and latch by themselves.
- Enrol children in swimming lessons and teach basic water survival skills.
- Learn CPR: parents, carers, older children and pool owners should all know it.
- Never leave standing water in buckets, paddling pools or baths.
- Choose a beach with lifeguards and ask them about local conditions.

DURING

- Stay within arm's reach of young children and new swimmers.
- Put your phone away while children swim. Drowning can happen within minutes.
- Keep watching closely. Drowning can happen in seconds and is often silent.
- On lifeguarded beaches, swim only inside the marked safe zone, such as between red and yellow flags.
- Caught in a rip current? Do not fight it. Swim parallel to the shore, then head in.
- If you struggle, lean back and float until your breathing calms, then call for help.
- If someone struggles, reach with a pole or throw a rope tied to a float. Do not swim out untrained.
- In the UAE, call 998 for an ambulance, 999 for police or 996 for the coastguard.

AFTER

- If the person is not breathing, call 998, give 5 rescue breaths, then start CPR: 30 chest compressions to 2 rescue breaths.
- Be ready to roll them onto their side, as many drowning casualties vomit.
- Once breathing, place them in the recovery position and keep checking them.
- Swap wet clothes for dry ones and cover them with blankets to keep warm.

IN THE UAE

Dubai Municipality says qualified lifeguards guard its beaches. It asks beachgoers to follow lifeguard instructions, watch children constantly, and night swim only in designated zones.

MY NOTES

Sources: Abu Dhabi Police, Abu Dhabi Police: 5 steps to avoid children drowning in swimming pools (https://www.adpolice.gov.ae/Media-Center/News/2021/07/01/Abu-Dhabi-Police--5-steps-to-avoid-children-drowning-in-swimming-pools); American Red Cross, Water safety tips for the pool, beach and water park (https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/news/2018/water-safety-tips-for-the-pool--beach-and-water-park.html); RNLI, Rip currents (https://rnli.org/safety/know-the-risks/rip-currents); RoSPA, Respect the Water (https://rospa.com/leisure-safety/water/respectthewater); MedlinePlus (US National Library of Medicine), Near drowning (https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000046.htm); St John Ambulance, Drowning: first aid advice (https://www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/drowning/); Dubai Municipality, Dubai opens three new beaches for night swimming (https://www.dm.gov.ae/?p=292624); Dubai Municipality, Jumeira Beach (beach rules and flags) (https://www.dm.gov.ae/?p=8668); UAE Government portal (u.ae), Handling emergencies (https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/handling-emergencies); CDC, About drowning (https://www.cdc.gov/drowning/about/)
General guidance in our own words. Always follow your local authorities.