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Play Safe: Swimming Pool Safety Tips

Between the ages of 4 and 6 is the best time to teach your child to swim, but research shows that the earlier you can help your child get comfortable in the water, the better.

By Elizabeth Callahan



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Photo: Darius Ramazani/Media Bakery

Keep a watchful eye. It's worth reiterating the importance of keeping close tabs on your kids when they're in the water. If your child is going to a pool party or other group event involving swimming, call ahead and make sure there will be a lifeguard on duty. If you can't go to the party yourself, consider sending a [trusted babysitter or other adult](#) with your kids to actively watch them.

Wear a life jacket. Children who are new swimmers should wear life jackets whenever they are near the water. Look for the U.S. Coast Guard approval seal on the one you buy and make sure it fits snugly. If you can fit two fingers underneath the shoulder straps, it's too big.

Teach early. Becoming a strong swimmer is one of the most important ways to reduce the chance of drowning. Between the ages of 4 and 6 is the best time to teach your child to swim, but research shows that the earlier you can help your child get comfortable in the water, the better.

Play safely. They may seem harmless, but water games that include breath-holding encourage an activity that really is a safety hazard. Instead of options like racing underwater or playing "tea party," offer your kids above-water alternatives like tossing a beach ball or having a backstroke race.

Source: Tom Griffiths, Ed.D., the founder of Aquatic Safety Research Group

Elizabeth Callahan is the assistant editor for Parent & Child.

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