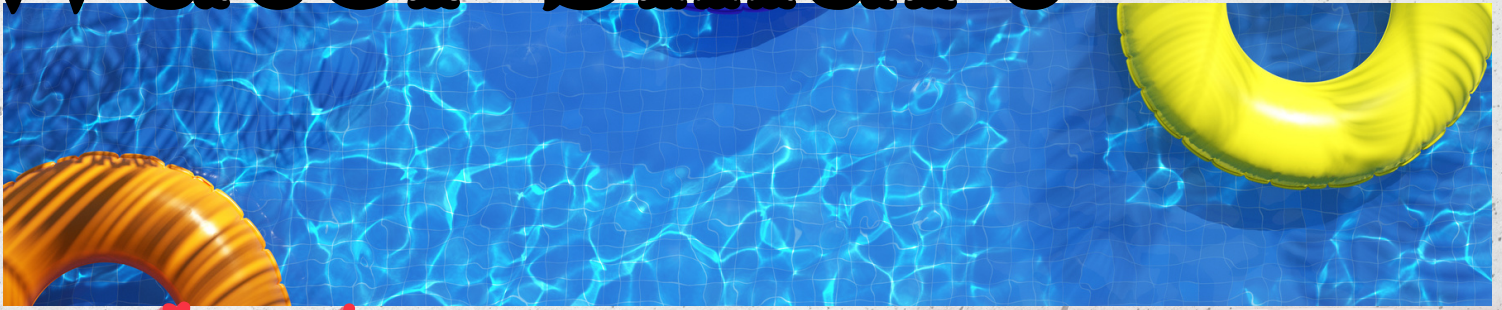


THINKING Water Smart

MARCH 2026



Lifejackets Save Lives

U.S. Coast Guard Warning: Arm floaties are NOT safety devices. They are NOT Coast Guard-approved and cannot replace a proper life jacket or supervision. A 2023 Harris Poll found 66% of parents wrongly believe floaties keep children safe.

Problems with arm floaties:

- Can slip off or deflate without warning
- Keep child vertical — the same dangerous position as drowning
- Provide no head support if child tips forward
- Create a false sense of security — parents and children relax vigilance

Use instead: Coast Guard-approved life jackets rated for your child's current weight, with head support for infants/toddlers. Look for the approval label!

CA Assembly Committee on Privacy. (2024). AB 2148 Analysis. | NDPA. (n.d.). How to choose the safest life jacket for your kids.

PLAYING IN THE HEAT

Pool days combine heat, physical activity, and sun exposure all at once, and the cool water masks how overheated your child's body is actually becoming. Children lose water faster than adults and may not feel thirsty until mild dehydration has already begun.

Signs of dehydration:

- Dark yellow urine (light/clear = well hydrated ✓)
- Dry mouth, lips, few tears when crying
- Irritability, fatigue, difficulty focusing

Signs of heat exhaustion:

- Pale, cool, moist skin with heavy sweating
- Nausea, vomiting, dizziness, headache, cramps
- Weakness or fainting after exertion
- Heat stroke is a 911 emergency: High body temperature + confusion, irrational behavior, or loss of consciousness = call immediately.
- Offer water every 15-20 minutes during play. Reapply sunscreen every 2 hrs or after swimming.

AAP. (n.d.). Extreme heat: Tips to keep kids safe. HealthyChildren.org. | Johns Hopkins Medicine. (2024). Dehydration and heat stroke.

Be on the Lookout

When kids understand why a rule exists, they follow it — and remind others. Here's what's behind the most common pool rules:

- No running: Wet concrete + bare feet = head and spinal injuries from falls onto pool edges.
- No diving in shallow water: ~800 U.S. spinal cord injuries per year from shallow dives. The Red Cross recommends a minimum of 9 feet of water depth for any head-first dive.
- Buddy system: A buddy can call for help or alert a lifeguard within the critical first seconds — the difference between a scare and a tragedy.
- Stay away from drains: Pool drain suction can trap hair, limbs, or fingers. If a drain cover is missing — exit immediately and notify staff.
- No alcohol for supervising adults: Alcohol impairs judgment and slows reaction time — exactly the skills needed to recognize and respond to a water emergency.

💡 Review one rule + its reason with your child before each pool visit. Repetition builds life-saving habits.

Wellness

Tips



March is National Nutrition Month! Did you know that different colors of Fruits and Vegetables hold different vitamins and minerals we all need every day? Try to eat the Rainbow in fruits and veggies every week!



10/20

PROTECTION STANDARD



A trained lifeguard must scan their entire zone within 10 seconds and reach any swimmer in distress within 20 seconds. Why? A drowning person can only stay at the surface for 20-60 seconds before sinking, and brain damage can begin within 4-6 minutes without oxygen.

- Developed by Jeff Ellis & Associates; adopted at pools & water parks across the U.S.
- The YMCA uses a similar "10/10 Reaction" standard.
- Even WITH a lifeguard present, parents must also watch guards cover the entire pool; you cover just your child.

Parent Tip: Appoint one adult as the dedicated "Water Watcher" no phone, no conversation, rotate every 15-20 minutes to stay sharp.

Ellis & Associates (2020), International Lifeguard Training Program Manual. | Griffiths, T. (n.d.). A timing issue. Aquatics International.

Shocking stat: ~50% of children who drown do so within 25 yards of a parent and in 10% of cases, the parent is watching but doesn't recognize it. (Virginia Dept. of Health)

This is called the Instinctive Drowning Response (Dr. Francesco Pia, Ph.D.) — the body's airway prioritizes breathing over speech, so the child cannot call out or wave.

- Silence — no screaming, no crying
- Vertical in the water, not horizontal
- Arms pressing down — not waving up
- Mouth at water level, head tilted back
- Glassy or closed eyes, blank expression
- No leg kick — legs hang straight down

Vittone, M. (2015). Drowning doesn't look like drowning. Slate. | Divers Alert Network. (2020). What drowning really looks like.



DROWNING

Doesn't Look Like Drowning

