

Anchors Aweigh to Water Safety

When the weather is hot, Safe Kids Grand Forks knows that cooling off in a body of water can be very refreshing. Swimming is a lot of fun and can be done individually, but we recommend always swimming with active adult supervision. Active adult supervision means that an adult has their eyes on the swimmers at all times; they are not napping, on their phone, reading, visiting with others or off in another location. It means that they are directly in sight and reach of those swimming should they have trouble and need immediate assistance. Drowning is the second leading cause of death in children and it happens quickly. A child can drown in seconds in only one inch of water and it is often silent in nature so having an attentive eye on the swimmer is important.

Parents who have a backyard pool should always stay within sight and reach of kids when they are using the pool. Self-locking and four-sided fencing should be installed around the water to keep children away, and ladders should always be removed from above ground pools and stored in a separate location when the pool is unoccupied. Be especially aware and careful of above ground pools that may be in your neighborhood as these often don't have fencing around them.

When enjoying the water at lakes, rivers or swimming pools, everyone should wear a proper fitting life jacket that is US Coast Guard approved. Life jackets should be worn by children when they are in or near the water. Adults and children alike should wear life jackets when they are on the water; they are not just for those that are weak swimmers. Remember, there are different styles of life jackets depending on their use. Waterskiing life jackets are designed differently than fishing boat life jackets. To be safe, make sure the life jacket is appropriate for the activity and is fitted correctly before use. Don't rely on inflatable devices such as water wings or floaties to keep a person afloat.

Life jackets are fitted by a person's weight. The sizes typically available are under 30 pounds (infant), 30-50 pounds (child), 50-90 pounds (youth), and 90 pounds and above (adult). In the water, a child weighs 6-8 pounds and an adult weighs up to 15 pounds. An adult life jacket is designed to keep at least 15 pounds afloat. With that in mind, a life jacket is meant for one person only. One life jacket will not hold the weight of two people. Call 9-1-1 if someone is drowning and do not attempt to rescue them if you do not have proper training.

For more information on water safety or other childhood injury topics, contact Safe Kids Grand Forks at safekids@altru.org or call 701.780.1489. You can also visit our web site at www.safekidsgf.com. As a note, there are several life jacket loaner board for use at the water's edge/boating ramp in several locations in ND and MN. These have been placed there by Safe Kids Grand Forks, the North Dakota Game & Fish Department and the Sea Tow Foundation. For those looking to buy or borrow a life jacket at other locations, contact Safe Kids Grand Forks at 701.780.1489 or visit our website at

<https://www.safekidsgf.com/WaterSafety.html#LifeJackets>. The included image shares information on checking the proper fit and use of a lifejacket.

Is my life jacket correct?

Life jackets come in sizes to fit babies through large adults. They are intended to keep you afloat in lakes, rivers, pools and other bodies of water. Worn correctly, they work!

Life jacket should fit snug around the chest and should not ride up on your body when in the water.

Check for a weight limit on the inside of the life jacket. Use the correct size based on weight.

Straps should be pulled tight and not twisted.

All buckles should be fastened.

Damaged life jackets should be discarded and replaced. Check often for holes, tears and buoyancy.

Some smaller weight life jackets have a strap between the legs, too. Be sure to fasten that for extra protection.

