

Focus on Health
Water Safety Information for Parents

F.S. 1003.225

St. Johns County School District, Health Services Dept.
School Year 2026-2027



Water Safety for Kids and Teens

Source: Florida Department of Children and Families and Healthy Children.Org

Teaching water safety and how to swim is a key part of reducing child drownings. In Florida, drownings are one of the leading causes of child deaths.

The following information is important to teach to your teen or younger child:

- **Always supervise; it saves lives.** Drowning can happen quickly and quietly, which is why actively watching your swimmer is a necessity. Make sure your teen knows to swim only where there are lifeguards on duty and to never swim alone. Urge them to use the buddy system, even when swimming with large groups of friends. It is important for young children to know that the fun can't begin until a "Water Watcher" is present. Once an adult is watching, the swimming fun can start. Make sure your child knows never to go near the water alone and always has a swimming partner.
- **Wear a lifejacket.** Like adults, adolescents should always wear life jackets whenever they are on boats, jet skis and other watercraft. Younger children should also wear life jackets including while in a floating device or on a dock. If a child cannot swim or is an inexperienced swimmer, lifejackets should be utilized at all times while in the water. Never rely on inflatable tubes and rafts as life preservers.
- **Learn how to swim.** Swimming lessons have been shown to reduce drowning incidents, which is why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 4 and older learn to swim. Even if your child has taken swimming lessons, never assume that their risk of drowning has subsided. Always be cautious of pool floats or toys that could interfere with your child in the water. If your family hasn't been able to learn basic swim and water survival skills yet, it's not too late! Many organizations offer lessons specifically geared toward teens and adults.
- **Teach your teen to always enter the water for the first time feet first.** It is important to know the water's depth beforehand. Also, going in feet first helps them know whether there are underwater hazards like large rocks that can't be seen from the surface. Make sure they look for—and follow—any "No Diving" instructions posted. Diving into unsafe water can lead to serious, and sometimes permanent, spinal injuries.
- **If there is an emergency, call 9-1-1 or find an adult.** Although a child may have had swimming lessons or is utilizing a life jacket, sometimes water accidents do happen. Make sure your child knows to call for help or find an adult when trouble occurs. When watching a child swim, always make sure to have a cell phone nearby in order to call 911 if a dangerous situation arises. Stress the importance of staying away from pool drains and suction fittings in order to have a fun, safe swimming experience.

To find swimming lessons in your area. Contact your local YMCA, city facilities, or swim school.

YMCAs in St. Johns County are listed below

Brown Family YMCA
170 Landrum Lane
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
Website:
<https://fcymca.org/locations/ponte-vedra-ymca/>

St. Augustine YMCA
500 Pope Road
St. Augustine, FL 32080
Website:
<http://fcymca.org/locations/st-augustine-ymca/>

Solomon Calhoun Community Center Pool
1300 Duval Street
St. Augustine, FL 32084

For More Information on Swim Lessons go to
<https://fcymca.org/youth-swim/>