

FACT SHEET 04: WATER AWARENESS



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Royal Life Saving

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY - AUSTRALIA

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SWIMMING POOL REGISTER OPEN FROM 29 APRIL 2013 – www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au

From 29 April 2013, pool owners are required to register their backyard swimming pools in an online register to be provided by the NSW State Government. Visit the register website at www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au and follow the easy registration steps.

Swimming pool registration is free. If you can't access the online register after 29 April 2013, your local council will be able to register on your behalf (a fee of up to \$10.00 may apply).

The Register will promote pool safety and pool compliance in response to the challenge of reducing the number of deaths and injuries to children in backyard swimming pools in NSW. The Register will provide pool owners with pool safety checklists to help them to self-assess their pool's safety. Pool owners will be asked to indicate that, to the best of their knowledge, their swimming pool complies with the Standard applicable to their pool. There may be a penalty applied to owners who fail to register a swimming pool by 29th October 2013 (penalty notice amount of \$220).

Q. WHAT IS WATER AWARENESS?

A. Water awareness is a term which covers a range of strategies which can help ensure your child's safety when in, on, or around water. This includes water familiarisation, checking for and removing water hazards (e.g. buckets), setting rules around water and discussing water safety with your child.

Q. WHAT IS WATER FAMILIARISATION?

A. Water familiarisation classes are generally held at public swimming pools and aquatic centres and provide an opportunity for parents and carers to get their child involved in the development of aquatic skills and water confidence, while increasing social, emotional, mental and physical skills in a safe environment.

Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WATER AWARENESS AND LEARN TO SWIM?

A. Water awareness classes, such as Royal Life Saving's Swim and Survive Wonder Program focus on the gradual introduction of very basic skills, such as moving in the water, getting the face wet and blowing bubbles for children aged 6 to 36 months. The Courage program is aimed at children aged 3 to 5 years and teaches water confidence. Learn to swim classes are suitable for children 5 years and over and focus on developing the basic skills taught in water awareness classes and turning them into recognisable strokes and the confidence to swim without being held by an adult or carer.

Q. WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO BE WATER AWARE?

A. You can use bath time as a time for water awareness, letting your baby or child feel, experience and play with water. You can also put rules in place for children when they go near water and ensure that parents and adults uphold these rules themselves to set a good example. When visiting new aquatic locations you can examine these together with your child and discuss any safety issues and rules for that location with your child.

Q. WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM A WATER AWARENESS CLASS?

A. Generally, a water awareness class will involve a small number of parents/carers with their child participating with an instructor who facilitates learning through fun games, songs and activities. There is also a focus on providing key water safety messages to parents and carers. Typical skills taught to children include: entering and exiting the water safely with a carer, being gently rocked and being encouraged to splash and kick their legs.

Q. CAN I PRACTICE THESE SKILLS AT HOME?

A. Yes, you can also play in the home pool with your child or use bath time to help them become familiar with water. Bath time is especially good as you can familiarise children with water almost from birth. Use a baby bath big enough to allow movement. Hold the baby underneath their head and move them forwards and backwards, allowing them to feel the movement of the water.

WATER AWARENESS CHECKLIST:

- Bath time used as a time for water awareness
- Rules in place for children when they go near water
- New aquatic locations examined with children
- Hazards and risks at new locations discussed and rules set
- Parents at picnics and parties have a designated child supervisor near water actively supervising
- Parents at picnics and parties near water upholding rules

To download all the fact sheets on water safety, please visit:
swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au
or call 02 9634 3700



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