American Medical Society for Sports Medicine

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SPORTS MEDICINE TODAY

AMSSM's Quarterly Newsletter for the Public

Helping Kids Become Water Wise

Holly J. Benjamin, MD, FACSM

Summer is here! Pools, lakes, ponds, and beaches mean summer fun and cool relief from hot weather. However, water also can be dangerous for kids if you don't take the proper precautions. Nearly 1,000 kids die each year by drowning, and most drownings occur in home swimming pools. It is the second leading cause of accidental death for people between the ages of five and 24.

The good news is there are many ways to keep your kids safe in the water and make sure that they take the right precautions when they're on their own.

Keeping Kids Safe

Kids need constant supervision around water — whether the water is in a bathtub, a wading pool, an ornamental fish pond, a swimming pool, a spa, the beach or a lake. Young children are especially vulnerable — they can drown in less than two inches (six centimeters) of water. That means drowning can happen where you'd least expect it — the sink, the toilet bowl, fountains, buckets, inflatable pools or small bodies of standing water around your home, such as ditches filled with rainwater. Always watch children closely when they're in or near any water.

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If you don't already, it's a good idea to learn how to swim. Kids older than four years should learn as well (check the local recreation center for classes taught by qualified instructors). Kids who are younger (but older than age one) also might benefit from swimming lessons, but check with your doctor first.

Don't assume that a child who knows how to swim isn't at risk for drowning. All kids need to be supervised in the water, no matter what their swimming skill levels. Infants, toddlers and weak swimmers should have an adult swimmer within arm's reach to provide "touch supervision."

Invest in proper-fitting, Coast Guard-approved flotation devices (life vests) and use them whenever a child is near water. Check the weight and size recommendations on the label, then have your child try it on to make sure it fits snugly. For kids younger than five years old, choose a vest with a strap between the legs and head support — the collar will keep the child's head up and face out of the water. Inflatable vests and arm devices such as water wings are not effective protection against drowning.

Don't forget the sunscreen and reapply frequently, especially if the kids are getting wet. UV sunglasses, hats and protective clothing can also help provide sun protection. Kids should drink plenty of fluids, particularly water, to prevent dehydration. It's easy to get dehydrated in the sun, especially when kids are active and sweating. Dizziness, feeling lightheaded or nausea are just some of the signs of dehydration and overheating.

At Home

Having a pool, pond, spa or hot tub on your property is a tremendous responsibility when it comes to safety.

Hot tubs may feel great to adults, but kids can become dangerously overheated in them and can even drown — so it's best not to let them use them at all.

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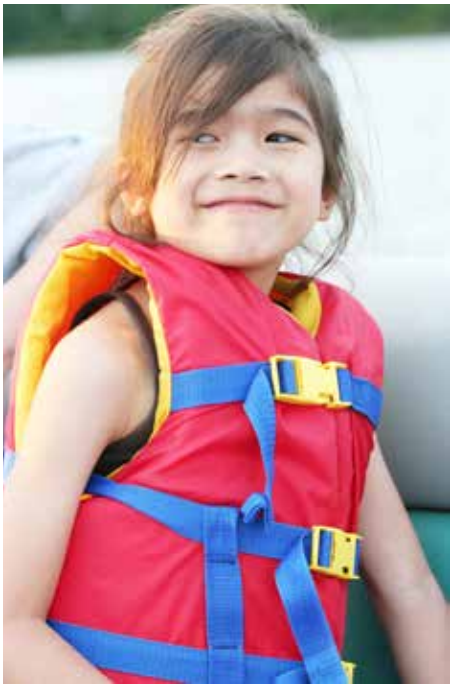
Having a fence (one that goes directly around the pool or spa) between the water and your house is the best safety investment you can make and will help prevent pool-related drownings.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), fences should meet these standards:

- Fences should stand at least 4 feet (130 centimeters) high with no foot or handrails for kids to climb on.
- The slats should be less than 4 inches (110 millimeters) apart so a child can't get through, or if chain link, should have no opening larger than 1¾ inches (50 millimeters).
- Gates should be self-closing and self-latching, and the latch should be out of kids' reach.

You can buy other devices, such as pool covers and alarms, but these haven't been proved effective against drowning for very young children, so fencing remains your best measure of protection.

After your kids are finished playing in the pool for the day, be sure to remove all pool toys and put them away. Children have drowned while trying to retrieve playthings left in the pool. You should still be concerned about water safety, even after the swim season has passed. Pools with covers are not safe; many kids attempt to walk on top of pools during the winter months and may get trapped underneath a pool cover.



In addition, icy pools, ponds and streams are tempting play areas for kids, so keep your pool gates locked and teach your kids to stay away from water without your supervision. If you have an above-ground pool, it's wise to always lock or remove the ladder when the pool is not in use.

At Lakes, Ponds, or Beaches

First, teach kids never to swim alone. Using the buddy system means there's always someone looking out for you. Make sure your kids understand that swimming in a lake or the ocean is different from swimming in a pool— there are different hazards for each.

Here are some tips:

- Don't let kids swim without adult supervision — lakes or ponds may be shallow near the bank and then increase in depth sharply further out from shore.
- Ponds and lakes may hide jagged rocks, broken glass, or trash.
- Make sure kids wear foot protection; even in the water, they should wear aqua socks or water shoes.
- Watch out for weeds and grass that could entangle a leg or arm.
- Most boating accidents, particularly among teenagers, are related to alcohol. When you and your family are boating, assign a designated driver who won't drink. Be sure teens know about the dangers of alcohol on and off the water.

At the Beach

Teach kids to always swim when and where a lifeguard is on duty. They shouldn't swim close to piers or pilings because sudden water movements may cause swimmers to collide with them.

- Unlike the calm waters of a swimming pool, the beach has special dangers like currents and tides. Check with the lifeguard when you arrive to find out about the water conditions.
- Don't allow kids to swim in large waves or undertows, and tell them never to stand with their back to the water because a sudden wave can easily knock them over.
- Teach kids that if they're caught in a rip current or undertow, they should swim parallel to the shore or should tread water and call for a lifeguard's help.
- The stings of jellyfish or Portuguese Man-of-Wars can be painful, so tell kids to avoid them in the water and to tell an adult right away if they're stung.
- Whether at the lake or at the beach, teach your child to get out of the water during bad weather, especially storms with lightning.

What to Do in an Emergency

Whenever a child is missing, always check the pool first. Survival depends on a quick rescue and restarting breathing as soon as possible.

If you find a child in the water, immediately get the child out while calling loudly for help. If someone else is available, have them call 911. Check to ensure the child's air passages are clear. If the child is not breathing, CPR should be initiated as necessary. This is best done by someone who is trained in CPR. When the emergency number is called, follow the instructions the emergency operators provide.

If you think the child may have suffered a neck injury, such as with diving, then keep the child on his or her back and brace the neck and shoulders with your hands and forearms to help keep the neck immobilized, until emergency help arrives. This type of immobilization minimizes further injury to the spine and is best performed by someone who is trained in the technique. Don't let the child move. Speak in calm tones to keep the child comforted. Continue to watch for adequate breathing.

Water play can be a great source of fun and exercise. You'll enjoy the water experience more by knowing and practicing these safety precautions. ■

On the Road to Fitness

Jeffrey Bytomski, DO

Have you already stopped your "I'm going to exercise and get fit" New Year's Resolution? Well now is a perfect time to get moving again. Summertime is finally here for most areas of the country and that means a lot of people will want to get outside and get active!

One great way to get into shape is to participate in a race, whether it's a 5k, half marathon or triathlon. If you like to get dirty and climb over obstacles you may consider participating in a fun run or "mud run"! The first thing you should do is sign up for a local race. This will help you establish a goal. One good website to find various types of local races is www.active.com.

After signing up, your next step is to find a training program that suites you and your goal. Having a program in place gives you a plan to follow and some accountability when training. A great website to find from "couch to 5k" to full ironman training programs is www.beginnertriathlete.com. Smartphones offer a wealth of 'apps' that have programs and "personal training" coaches to motivate you. Many of them are free.

You should also consider training with a friend or even getting a team together. This will make it more fun and will also keep you motivated on those days when you don't want to work out.

Your goal and training may look different from others, but these simples steps can get you on your way to a healthier, fitter you.

- Set a goal and sign up for a race this summer.
- Find a training program that suits you.
- Get friends involved to share your fitness journey.

So what are you waiting for? Let's move!

COACH'S CORNER

HYDRATION TIPS

It takes more than having water coolers around to keep your athletes safe and performing at optimal levels. Here are some tips to educate your athletes on maintaining proper hydration, especially as we enter the warmer summer months.

1. Have weigh-ins before and after exercise if possible. This will help an athlete know how much fluid intake is necessary for them and if they are falling behind or drinking too much.
2. Educate athletes on urine color. (Lighter is better hydrated)
3. Modify practice in hot, humid conditions. Adjust practice time, amount or intensity. Allow frequent hydration breaks and consider equipment modification.
4. Encourage athletes to drink fluids before, during and after exercise.
5. Water is encouraged unless the exercise is greater than 60 minutes. You may consider sports drinks if activity is greater than 60 minutes.
6. Keeping fluids cold will encourage more hydration by the athletes.
7. For optimum performance, athletes should continue drinking BEFORE becoming thirsty.

Source: Lopez, R., Casa D. Hydration for Athletes: What coaches can do to keep their athletes healthy and performing their best, 2006.

Choosing Wisely: MRI Recommendation

Amy P. Powell, MD

Choosing Wisely™ is an initiative of the American Board of Internal Medicine and supported by multiple medical societies, including the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine. Each Society was asked to contribute five diagnostic tests or treatments that both physicians and patients should question. The highlight this quarter is the AMSSM's "number four" recommendation:

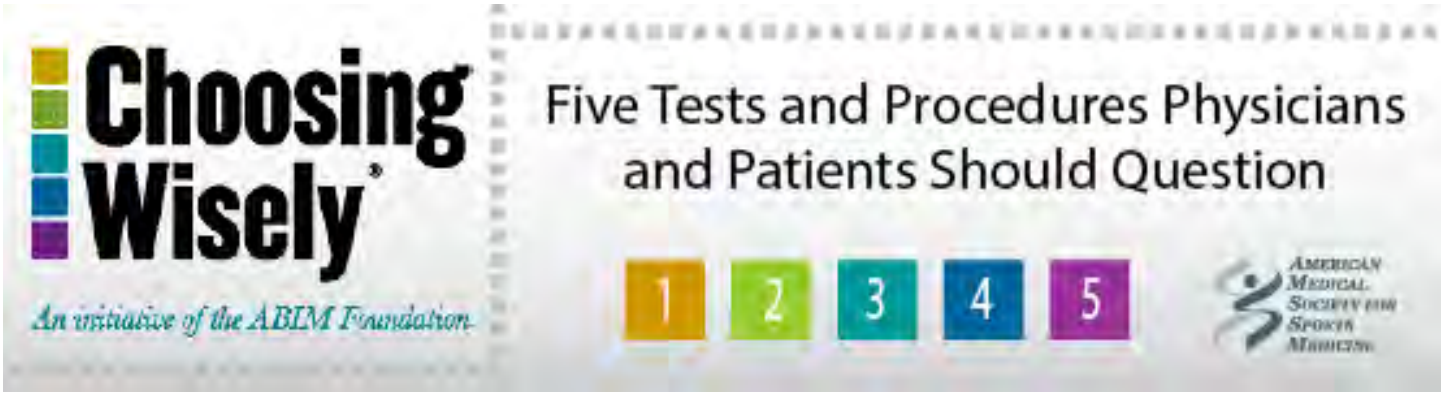
Avoid ordering a knee MRI for a patient with anterior knee pain without mechanical symptoms or effusion unless the patient has not improved following completion of an appropriate functional rehabilitation program.

The most common cause of anterior knee pain is patellofemoral pain syndrome. Patellofemoral syndrome (PFS) is the most common cause of knee pain seen by sports medicine physicians and orthopedic surgeons. Classic symptoms include pain around or under the kneecap (patella), which may become worse with certain activities like running, hiking (particularly down hill), strength training activities like squats and lunges, and daily activities such as kneeling and squatting. It is usually caused by imbalances in strength and flexibility of the muscles that support the motion of the kneecap.

The diagnosis of PFS is almost always made without specific imaging studies, either x-ray or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). A sports medicine physician will ask the athlete questions about his or her symptoms, the location of pain, what makes the pain better or worse and then perform a careful physical examination of the knee to exclude other potential causes of knee pain. If the history and physical examination support the diagnosis of PFS, x-rays and/or MRI are not necessary.

MRI is rarely helpful in managing this syndrome. Treatment should focus on a guided exercise program to correct lumbopelvic and lower limb strength and flexibility imbalances. Knee taping or bracing may also be helpful. If pain persists, if there is recurrent swelling or if mechanical symptoms such as locking and painful clicking are present and radiographs are non-diagnostic, an MRI may be useful.

Visit Patellofemoral Syndrome | Sports Medicine Today for more information about symptoms, prevention, and management of this common condition. Visit Choosing Wisely for more information about this campaign. ■



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