

Beach and Water Safety

Unintentional Injury Prevention

COVID 19 UPDATE

The RNLI lifeguard services are currently limited on beaches in the UK. Please check the [list of beaches currently patrolled](#) for more information. Although their volunteer lifeboat crews are fully operational if needed, this is your watch too. Follow safety advice to protect yourself and your loved ones – and you will help to reduce the demands placed on the lifeboat crews and other emergency services.

Essential safety information to support parents, grandparents and carers to keep children and young people safe at the beach and around water this summer and always.

Drowning prevention – what you need to know:

1. Children should be supervised in the water at all times.
2. Do not rely on older children to supervise.
3. It is not just young children who are at risk. Older children and teens can get into trouble, especially while ‘wild’ swimming. Strong currents, deep water and objects lurking under the water are unlikely to be obvious.
4. Do not assume that because a child can swim, they will be safe.
5. Drowning happens silently. As drowning occurs - a child is unable to speak or to control their arm movements, and they slip quietly under the water – it is a myth that they splash about, shout or scream.
6. Do not rely on lifeguards – provision, training and legislation varies in different countries, and lifeguards may have other duties.
7. Even if you have taken steps to make your garden or environment safe, children have drowned after wandering into neighbouring gardens. Be mindful of this at home and on holiday.



8. RoSPA research shows the most common times for children to drown on holiday are the first and the last days.
9. Empty paddling pools when they are not in use.
10. At the beach, wind blowing off the land can make the sea look flat, calm and safe but it can easily sweep inflatables quickly out to sea, and children will be tempted to go after them.
11. Finally, expect children to do unexpected things. They cannot be relied on to keep themselves safe, even if they say they can!

Drowning prevention RNLI campaign:

Respect the Water is the RNLI's drowning prevention campaign, highlighting the risks of cold water shock. When you fall into water below 15°C, you instinctively gasp for air, increasing your chance of inhaling water. Instead, relax and float for around 90 seconds to minimise this risk.

5 steps to float

1. If you fall into water, fight your instinct to swim until cold water shock passes
2. Lean back, extend your arms and legs
3. If you need to, gently move them around to help you float
4. Float until you can control your breathing
5. Only then, call for help or swim to safety

How to float video: <https://youtu.be/jlEw55a6dcw>

Staying safe at the beach:

The RNLI lifeguard services are currently limited on beaches in the UK. If you are going to visit the beach:

- Choose a lifeguarded beach from the [list of beaches currently patrolled](#), where trained professionals are on hand to keep you safe, in and out of the water.
- If you can't make it to a lifeguarded beach, then read our safety advice.



- Understand beach flags and signs: If the beach you're at is not lifeguarded, please take extra care if you are going into the water. If lifeguards are on patrol, then you'll need to know your flags:

 <p>Red and yellow beach flag</p>	<p>Lifeguarded area. Safest area to swim, bodyboard and use inflatables.</p>
 <p>Black and white chequered beach flag</p>	<p>For surfboards, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft. Launch and recovery area for kitesurfers and windsurfers. Never swim or bodyboard here.</p>
 <p>Red beach flag</p>	<p>Danger! Never go in the water under any circumstances when the red flag is flying.</p>
 <p>Orange windsock</p>	<p>Indicates offshore or strong wind conditions. Never use inflatables when the windsock is flying.</p>

Information sources, and for more information, visit:

[Child Accident Prevention Trust – drowning](#)

[RNLI - Safety at the beach](#)

[RNLI Respect the water campaign](#)