

# Open Water Safety

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER FOR CHILDHOOD SAFETY...

The majority of drowning deaths in Washington occur in open water (oceans, bays, rivers, lakes, ponds, or creeks). Each type of open water has its own dangers.

Water under 70 degrees can dangerously lower body temperature at a rate that is 25% faster than air, causing hypothermia. Most Washington waters are glacier-fed, averaging **50-55 degrees YEAR ROUND**. Cold waters are especially dangerous to children because they enter hypothermia faster than adults.

- Provide constant supervision with no distractions.
- Wear a life jacket every time.
- Don't swim in natural bodies of water in the spring. Due to rapid snow melt water is colder and more hazardous than in the summer.
- Swim only in designated areas – preferably with a lifeguard present.
- Don't dive into natural bodies of water.
- Know that any child can get into trouble in the water, even if he/she is wearing a life jacket or has taken swimming lessons.
- Have an emergency plan. Carry a phone and a throwable rescue device. Learn CPR.



### HYPOTHERMIA

Occurs when your body's internal body temperature goes below 95 degrees and can be fatal. Symptoms include shivering, slurred speech, and bluish lips. If this occurs, immediately remove child from water.

### COLD WATER SURVIVAL

Maintaining body temperature is crucial to survival.

- Wear a life jacket – it keeps your core warm and your body afloat when your muscles freeze up.
- Do not swim if far from shore - movement lowers body temperature.

***Drowning is a leading cause of injury death for Washington children.***

**MultiCare**   
**Mary Bridge Center for Childhood Safety**

For more information, visit: [www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety](http://www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety)  
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# Know Your Open Water

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## OCEAN

**Rip currents** are powerful currents of water moving away from shore. They do not pull people under the water – they pull people away from the shore.

- Don't fight the current, remain calm.
- Float with the current until it begins to weaken. Swim parallel to the shore until you break free and then swim diagonally towards land.

**Sneaker Waves** quickly engulf an entire beach. They are more powerful during storms – they can knock you over and sweep you out to sea.

- Don't stand with your back to the water.
- When watching the waves, stay clear of where they are breaking.

**Tides** rise quickly and can trap you on rock formations or coves.

- Consult tide tables prior to beach combing or swimming.
- Be aware of when the tides will be changing.
- Avoid climbing on rocks or jetties.

**Tsunamis** are a series of massive ocean waves. Washington beaches have evacuation routes and procedures to follow.

- Get inland as fast as possible
- Leave belongings behind – every second counts.



## RIVERS

- Wear a life jacket. Beware of entrapment hazards.
- When caught in swift water, go with the current and fight the urge to stand up.
- Float with your feet up and out in front of you.

## LAKES

- Wear a life jacket.
- Beware of hidden hazards
  - Water may be shallow near the bank and then sharply drop off.
  - Weeds and grass can entangle your children's legs or arms.

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