Healthy and Safe Swimming

Key messages:
- Watch your child at all times as children do not understand danger
- Never leave your child alone in, on or near water. Children can drown in seconds and in silence
- The advice on this poster is important both at home and while on holidays
- Share this information with everyone who takes care of your child
- For child safety and injury prevention information visit www.hse.ie/childsafety

Swim nappies are not leak proof – change the nappy immediately when used.
Your swimming pool may have additional hygiene policies.
To keep baby safe and to help prevent germs from spreading in the pool, do not change nappies at the poolside – use the designated changing area and dispose of nappies properly.
Check your baby’s nappy often and take older children for frequent (every 30 – 60 minutes) trips to the toilet. Waiting to hear “I have to go” may mean that it’s too late!
If your child accidentally poos in the pool or their nappy leaks while in the pool, although it may be embarrassing for you, make sure you tell the pool attendant/lifeguard on duty.
If using buoyancy aids, make sure they have an approved safety standard mark, fit properly and are appropriate for your child’s age and developmental stage. These aids do not replace the need for supervision - watch your child at all times.

Watch your child at all times:
- Be careful of young children wandering off.
- Remember - all children need to be supervised in water, no matter what their swimming skills.
- Even when a lifeguard is on duty, watch your child at all times. Children can drown in seconds and in silence.
- Do not drink alcohol before or while you are supervising children who are near or in water. Never swim after drinking alcohol.

Keeping safe in the water – tips for adults:
- Swim with others - never alone or in strange places.
- Swim in designated swimming areas.
- Obey instructions from lifeguards.
- Pay attention to warning notices.
- Swim within your depth, parallel and close to shore.
- Do not swallow the water.
- Do not dive into water.
- Don’t stay in cold water for too long. If you or your child starts to shiver or get cramps, get out of the water immediately and get warm up.
- Look at your pool surroundings, especially when visiting a new pool or when arriving at a holiday resort.
- Check for missing, uneven or slippery tiles in or around the pool.
- Check how deep the pool is and make sure children and adults stay in a depth that is safe for them – be particularly careful in pools where there are no markings.
- Watch out for any sudden drops or changes in the depth of the pool.
- Do not allow children to go immediately into a pool until you have checked the safety arrangements.
- Watch out for child/baby pools that may be next to the main pool without any barrier between them.
- Obey all the usual safety rules that apply in any properly run pool, e.g. no running, running dives or horseplay.
- Do not swim in a pool with discoloured water - pool water should be clean and clear – you should be able to clearly see the bottom of the pool.
- Germs on your body end up in the water. Before and after using the pool, wash babies and younger children and make sure older children and adults shower. Wash hands after using the toilet or changing a nappy.
- Do not swim or allow your child to swim with diarrhoeal sickness – swim nappies will not protect from leaks.
- Children should not use Jacuzzis, saunas or steam rooms.
- If swimming outdoors, keep you and your child protected from the sun by wearing appropriate sunscreen and protective clothing.

Irish Water Safety (IWS)
Visit www.iws.ie for lots of water safety information and advice.

This information highlights some points and issues to be aware of for safe and healthy swimming. If you have any specific concerns, please talk to a health professional.