

FACT SHEET 02:

PORTABLE SWIMMING POOL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

australian consumer law

#MakeItSafe



Q. What are some of the safety issues associated with portable swimming pools?

A. Drowning of young children under five years of age in portable pools is the greatest risk. Parents often do not actively supervise their children when they are in portable swimming pools or leave them alone for a second to retrieve something from the house, believing that because there is only a small amount of water their child cannot drown. Children can drown in just seconds.

Q. How many children have drowned in portable swimming pools?

A. Children drown in portable swimming pools every year. In 2013/14, 20 children between the ages of 0-4 drowned in Australia. Swimming pools (in-ground, above-ground and portable) accounted for 70% of these drowning deaths, posing more than 4.5 times the drowning risk than that of any other aquatic location among this age group. Many more children are hospitalised as a result of a drowning incident in a portable swimming pool. Some children are left with persisting neurological impairment as a result of a near-drowning.

Q. Why do young children drown in portable swimming pools?

A. Young children are at risk of drowning in portable pools for a number of reasons. Young children are naturally fascinated by water and are top heavy so when they lean over to look into water or reach for an object they can easily topple over and drown in just a few centimetres of water. Young children are unable to understand the concept of danger and may have difficulty in understanding that water could cause them harm. Childhood drowning is a silent event as children generally do not cry out for help.

Q. Do I need to supervise my child or children when they are in a portable pool?

A. You should always actively supervise children when they are in or around the water (including portable swimming pools). You should be within arms' reach of your child at all times and actively supervising, by having constant visual contact with your child and be in a position to respond quickly. Parents should not leave young children in the care of older siblings.

Q. Do I need to fence my portable swimming pool?

A. By law, in most States and Territories, bodies of water over 300mm in depth, must be fenced – check with your local council for specific requirements. Fencing involves isolating the pool from the home with a well-constructed and well-maintained barrier and a gate that self-closes and self-latches. Most States and Territories have programs in place where pool owners can be fined for non-compliance.

PORTABLE POOLS SAFETY CHECKLIST:

- Check with your local council for fencing requirements.
- Make sure you always actively supervise children within arms' reach whenever they are in or around the water.
- Never rely on older children to supervise younger children, no matter how confident you are in their ability.
- For smaller pools ensure they are emptied and put away after use.
- When not in use, store the pool securely out of reach of young children.
- Ensure the pool cannot fill with rain water or water from sprinklers.
- Don't exceed the number of adults or children the pool can safely hold.

Take Simple Steps to
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REAL LIFE STORY:

Supervision Mix up Results in Drowning of Child

A toddler has drowned after a supervision mix up at a pre-Christmas barbeque. The girl slipped into an above ground portable swimming pool that has been set up to combat the heat. Both the girl's parents mistakenly thought the other was supervising the child. Unnoticed she climbed the ladder to the pool and fell in. By the time she was noticed missing it was too late. In the wake of this tragedy, Royal Life Saving continues to call on parents and carers of young children to identify a 'Designated Child Supervisor' to ensure mix ups like this do not happen and safety around water is a key priority this summer.

For further information contact Royal Life Saving on **1300 737 763** or visit royallifesaving.com.au/makeitsafe

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