

Top 10 Ocean Safety Tips For Kids!

(And Their Families!)



By Eric Naftulin

There's nothing better than a day at the beach. The sun, the surf ... What could be more fun? Yet no environment is risk-free. The ocean is powerful and unpredictable, and without the proper safety precautions can also be dangerous. If you're a parent, please share this information with your kids before you visit the beach this summer.



1. Learn to Swim. The ocean is powerful and can be difficult to navigate. Do not enter the ocean unless you know how to swim. Similarly, never rely on flotation devices like rafts or boogie boards in place of actual swimming ability. If you fall off the flotation device, but don't know how to swim, you could panic and have trouble retrieving your flotation device. Drownings can happen this way.

2. Swim Near a Lifeguard. The numbers don't lie. According to the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA), the odds of drowning at a public beach is nearly nonexistent (18,000,000 to 1) when swimming at a lifeguard-protected beach. No lifeguard? No swimming! No exceptions!

3. Protect Your Head and Neck. Never dive into the ocean headfirst because it's a leading cause of head and neck injuries. Always enter the ocean feet first, and if you're boogie boarding, keep your hands out in front to protect your head and neck.

4. Never Swim Alone. Safety in numbers? You bet! Always swim with a buddy and never swim alone, because many drownings involve single swimmers. If you ever get lost or separated from your buddy, tell the lifeguard immediately.

5. Obey All Posted Warning Signs and Flags. Signs and flags alert you to certain ocean beach and safety conditions. For clarification on what they mean, ask a lifeguard.

6. Never Turn Your Back on the Ocean. Even the smallest wave can knock you over and cause injury, especially if you are caught by surprise. Always face forward and never turn your back on the ocean.

7. Learn About Rip Currents and How to Get Out of Them. Ever notice that "muddy" ocean water appearance flowing away from the shore? Chances are, that's a rip current. Most lifeguard rescues are due to people getting caught in rip currents. Even the strongest swimmers get caught in them. They're dangerous because they pull you away from the beach into deeper water. To get out of a rip current, don't fight the current by trying to swim to shore. Instead, swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Then you can swim safely back to the beach.

8. Avoid Drugs and Alcohol. Alcohol and drugs can significantly impair your judgment. Under their influence, you might take unnecessary risks you otherwise wouldn't. Alcohol can lower your body temperature and weaken your swimming ability, and plays a major role in many drownings.

9. Beware of Trash and Broken Glass. Your bare feet are perfect targets for broken glass and other trash all over the beach. Walk gingerly and beware of these and other hazards. It is best to keep your shoes on while walking between your car and the area of the beach you set up.

10. Don't Forget the Sunscreen! Sunscreen protects you and your family from harmful UVA and UVB rays that can lead to sunburn and skin cancer. It should be applied several times during your day at the beach, especially after spending time in the water.

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