

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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How to stay safe on the water this summer

As temperatures rise, Albertans will take to our province's lakes, rivers and pools to cool off and enjoy the outdoors. For many, swimming and water sports are an unmissable part of our short prairie summers. Yet these activities, which typically occur on unsupervised bodies of water, are not without risks.

More than 400 Canadians drown every year, making drowning one of the leading causes of death for people under the age of 25. In many cases, these deaths are preventable. According to the Canadian Red Cross, young men ages 15 to 44 and children ages 1 to 4 are at the greatest risk of drowning.

July 18 to 24 is National Drowning Prevention Week, a period dedicated to increasing awareness of the risks associated with drowning and offering steps everyone can take to enhance their water safety. Below are a few tips to remember before hitting the water:

- **Always supervise children** – Distractions, even momentary, can be fatal. Drowning is fast and silent, often occurring in less than 30 seconds. Keep your eyes off your phone and on the water.
- **Always wear a lifejacket when in a boat** – Simply having a lifejacket on board is not adequate as its unlikely you'll be able to successfully retrieve it in the event of an emergency. According to the Canadian Red Cross, only 12.5 per cent of people who drowned in boating-related accidents were wearing a properly-fastened and fitted life jacket.
- **Use the buddy system** - Avoid going on the water alone; instead, invite a friend so you can look out for each other. Do this even if you're a strong swimmer.
- **Know your limits** – According to the Canadian Lifesaving Society, alcohol consumption is a factor in almost 40 per cent of boating-related fatalities. Both alcohol and cannabis use can impair your judgment, reflexes and balance.