



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®
The Lifeguarding Experts

Backyard Pool Safety

Lifesaving Society Guidelines and Inspection Checklist

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Backyard pool safety inspection checklist

Backyard pool drowning

Drowning occurs when a person experiences respiratory impairment due to submersion or immersion in liquid. Drowning can be fatal or non-fatal.

In non-fatal drowning, the person survives – with a range of possible outcomes. Some people may recover from their respiratory impairment with no long-term health effects. Others suffer varying degrees of brain damage with life-altering consequences.

Ontario averages more than 150 fatal drownings each year.

But there are *three to four times* as many non-fatal drownings that warrant visits to hospital emergency departments.

In Ontario, approximately 10% of all fatal drownings take place in backyard pools. Add three to four times as many non-fatal drownings.

All drownings are preventable.

Risk factors

Lifesaving Society research shows these risk factors associated with backyard pool drownings:

- » **Improper or inadequate fencing/gate:** Many fatalities occur in pools with no fence or where the fence is non-compliant with local by-laws, or where the fence has no gate or a gate that is not self-closing or self-latching.
- » **Unsupervised children:** Young children drown who are in the care of adults but with no direct supervision or with adults who are distracted from direct supervision.
- » **Weak and non-swimmers:** Weak swimmers and non-swimmers are vulnerable in the backyard pool environment.
- » **Adults alone:** Seniors who go swimming alone are at risk of drowning or because of a cardiac event.
- » **Alcohol:** Use of alcohol is confirmed in about 25% of Ontario drownings.

Children under five years of age have the highest rate of emergency department visits and hospitalizations due to non-fatal drowning.

Four-sided fencing

Direct access to the pool from the house is a factor in backyard pool drownings. The Lifesaving Society highly recommends enclosing the pool with fencing on all four sides, thereby restricting access from the house.

Backyard Pool Safety

The Lifesaving Society's *Backyard Pool Safety* is meant to help pool owners reduce the risk of drowning and water-related injury in their backyard pools and hot tubs. *Backyard Pool Safety* helps owners to analyze their pool and build "layers of protection," or multiple strategies to protect their family and friends from harm.

Backyard Pool Safety highlights the pool owner's responsibilities for ensuring a safe and secure aquatic environment. It describes Lifesaving standards and recommendations for backyard pool features, equipment and behaviour, together with common risk factors that lead to drowning or aquatic-related injury.

Backyard Pool Safety identifies the actions pool owners should take to prevent dangerous or risky behaviours. Importantly, it provides tips for supervising swimmers and outlines basic steps to follow in an emergency.

Backyard Pool Safety does not replace or supersede current legislation or regulation, but provides a reasonable standard that pool owners should work towards. Owners must comply with all applicable municipal legislation and by-laws.

About the Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society is a national charitable organization that works to prevent drowning and reduce water-related injury through its drowning research, training programs, Water Smart® public education, aquatic safety management services and lifesaving sport.

The Society establishes aquatic safety standards and consults on aquatic safety issues for aquatic facility owners and operators, governments, agencies and the judicial system.

The Society represents Canada internationally as an active member of the Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth and as Canada's Full Member in the International Life Saving Federation. The Society is the Canadian governing body for lifesaving sport – a sport recognised by the International Olympic Committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

The Lifesaving Society has been educating Canadians since the first Bronze Medallion was earned in 1896. Today, over 1.5 million Canadians participate in Lifesaving Society swimming, lifesaving, first aid, lifeguarding and leadership training programs every year.

Pool owner responsibilities

Backyard pool owners are responsible for ensuring the safety of all pool users. This includes verifying that pools have restricted access and appropriate safety measures such as ensuring supervision, maintaining water quality, conducting regular maintenance, and responding effectively in the event of an incident.

Duty of care

Duty of care is a legal obligation on a backyard pool owner to take reasonable steps to prevent harm to anyone on their property. It is a fundamental element in negligence cases, requiring proof that the defendant owed a duty, breached it, and that the breach directly caused the plaintiff's damages.

In practice, the pool owner's duty of care would include:

- » Following applicable legislation, regulation and industry standards
- » Providing a reasonably safe environment including restricting access with fencing/gate and regular inspection and maintenance of the pool area and equipment in good condition
- » Providing safety supervision for users, warnings about potential hazards (e.g., shallow depths, drop-offs, slippery surfaces), and education about pool rules and behaviour
- » Responding appropriately to emergencies

Municipal pool enclosure by-laws

Most municipalities specify *minimum* requirements for the protective enclosure or fencing of privately owned outdoor swimming pools, commonly referred to as pool enclosure by-laws. These regulations are intended to prevent unsupervised access to pool areas by children and other individuals. Your backyard pool enclosure must meet the criteria set forth in the municipality's by-law; compliance is legally required.

Pool owners are responsible for obtaining the pool enclosure by-laws. Contact your municipal office for an up-to-date official copy or to verify that the one you have is current.

If it's foreseeable, it's preventable.

Prevention starts with understanding the causes of injury and drowning in backyard pools and who is at risk. This knowledge helps you to anticipate potential hazards and recognize unsafe behaviours around the pool so you can take preventive action.

Commercial use of backyard pools

Providing swimming lessons or renting your backyard pool entails additional requirements.

Municipal by-laws govern business licensing. These by-laws may include provisions for the commercial use of backyard pools. Check with your municipal by-law office to determine the requirements in your area. In addition, contact your local Public Health Department to ensure that your facility meets public health regulations.

Insurance

If using your backyard pool as a source of income through swimming lessons or pool rentals, advise your insurance provider and ensure your policy provides adequate coverage for the activity you are hosting.

Swimming lessons

If you or someone you know is providing swimming lessons in a backyard pool, ensure that the instructor is aware of all safety procedures and equipment, and that they have the required qualifications, such as the Lifesaving Society Swim Instructor and Lifesaving Society Bronze Cross certifications, to help ensure a safe environment.

Pool rentals

If you rent your pool for use by others (whether you are home or away), ensure that they are aware of all safety procedures and equipment, and have someone with swimming and lifesaving skills (such as the Lifesaving Society Bronze Cross) to supervise and provide aid in the event of an emergency.

Backyard pool features and equipment

The backyard pool features and equipment included in this section are essential components of safety.

Fences

Pool fencing must conform to local by-laws whether it encloses just the pool area or the entire yard (see Municipal Pool Enclosure By-laws, page 6). In either case, the Lifesaving Society recommends the following:

- » A backyard pool fence should be at least 1.2 metres (4 feet) away from the edge of the water to provide adequate space to perform a rescue using a reaching pole.
- » The fence should be at least 1.5 metres (roughly 5 feet) high and constructed so it is difficult to climb.
- » Place all framing braces on the inside of the fence.
- » Use vertical, not horizontal, slats constructed so a child cannot slip through, yet you can still see through the slats. Maximum space between slats (vertical bars): 10 centimetres or 4 inches (although tighter spacing is recommended and may vary by local by-laws).
- » Follow local by-law restrictions regarding the size of the diamond-shaped clear opening (mesh size) of chain-link fences. Restrictions are meant to prevent climbing.
- » Construct the fence with continuous footings or ensure it is embedded into the earth to a depth of at least 1.2 metres (4 feet) below grade. Some municipalities or specific fence types may allow 0.9 metres (3 feet) for specific, lighter-duty fences, but 1.2 metres is the standard for in-ground, sturdy structures.
- » Continuous footings or an embedded fence are recommended to prevent children from pushing or digging their way under the bottom of the fence.
- » Remove / cut back any structure beside or near the fence that would allow a person to climb over the fence and gain access to the pool area. Examples include trees, hedges and lawn furniture.

Because direct access to the pool from the house is a factor in backyard pool drownings, the Lifesaving Society highly recommends enclosing the pool with fencing on all four sides thereby restricting access from the house.

Gates

Construct the gate(s) to include features that lessen the risk of children entering the pool area when unsupervised.

- » Place the gate latch at least 1.22 metres above ground level.
- » Ensure the gate is self-closing.
- » Ensure the gate latch is equipped with a two-phase opening mechanism and a self-locking mechanism.
- » Always keep the gate locked when no supervision is present. Lock the gate with a combination lock instead of a key. Make a neighbour aware of the combination in case of an emergency.
- » Place a sign on the gate stating: "This property contains a swimming pool. Do not enter without permission."

Barrier alarms

Various types of alarms can alert you to unauthorized access to the pool. These include door/gate alarms, motion sensors and in-water alarms. An alarm is a supplementary layer of protection that may be particularly warranted in pools that lack four-sided fencing.

An alarm may be subject to failure and is not a replacement for secure fencing or direct supervision.

Pool area

The pool area is defined as the space around the pool between the perimeter barrier and the edge of the pool. Keep the pool area clear of obstacles, slip and trip hazards, and toys. There are accounts of children falling into the water while playing or riding a tricycle around the deck.

- » Keep the pool area clear of hazardous materials such as glass, electrical devices and appliances.
- » Keep the pool area clear of pool maintenance materials and equipment.
- » Ensure that there is at least 100 lux of light at the water surface if the pool is used at night.
- » Ensure that all electrical outlets around the pool and deck are Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) and that these outlets are tested prior to opening and monthly thereafter. These devices will protect swimmers from electrical shock.

Lux is a measurement of light intensity. Safety requires adequate lighting at the water surface so pool users and those supervising them can see adequately. Generally, you should close your pool at dusk unless you have supplementary lighting with an intensity of at least 100 lux. You can measure lighting levels with a light meter.

Safety equipment

Check and install all pool equipment at the beginning of the season to ensure maximum safety (e.g., no tears or rips in buoy lines, lifejackets or ring buoys). Ensure the pool is equipped with the following:

- » **Buoy line:** Position a buoy line in shallow water at least 30 centimetres or one foot towards the shallow end from the slope where the pool bottom drops off.
- » **Reaching pole:** Ensure the length is 3.65 metres (12 feet) long or at least one-half of the distance of the width of the pool. Ensure the pole is electrically insulated or nonconducting.
- » **Buoyant throwing aid:** Must be securely attached to a 6 mm (0.25 in.) diameter rope which is one-half the width of the pool plus 3 metres (10 feet) or longer.
- » **Sound-signalling device:** A loud whistle or personal alarm to notify others in an emergency.
- » **A fully stocked first aid kit:** Conveniently located and containing at least:
 - Current edition of a first aid manual from a provincially-approved first aid training provider
 - Safety pins
 - Adhesive dressings (bandaids) individually wrapped
 - 75 mm sterile gauze pads
 - 50 mm gauze bandages
 - 100 mm gauze bandages
 - Sterile surgical pads suitable for pressure dressings
 - Triangular bandages individually wrapped
 - Rolls of splint padding
 - At least one roll-up splint
 - At least one pair of scissors
 - Non-permeable gloves
 - Resuscitation pocket masks
 - Tweezers

The Lifesaving Society, a provincially-approved first aid training provider, publishes the [Canadian First Aid Manual](#) and sells [first aid kits](#), supplies and gear.

- » **Telephone:** Locate a telephone at poolside along with emergency telephone numbers and the address of the pool, which will be needed when contacting emergency medical services.
 - A fully charged portable phone is ideal, as it allows those providing supervision to answer the phone or make an emergency call without leaving the pool area.
 - If a cell phone is used, ensure that the phone is charged and has reception at the pool's edge.

In-ground pools

An in-ground pool is partially or completely built into the ground.

- » Rungs on submerged ladders should be designed so that bathers cannot swim through them, thereby preventing entrapment.

Above-ground pools

An above-ground pool is a swimming pool structure that sits on the ground's surface.

Many above-ground pools are designed so that the walls of the pool form a barrier with a removable ladder providing the only access to the pool.

- » Always remove this ladder when the pool is not in use and secure the ladder in a locked location that children cannot access.
- » Rungs on submerged ladders should be designed so that bathers cannot swim through the ladder rungs, thereby preventing entrapment.

Hot tubs and spas

A hot tub is a pool that often contains features for hydrotherapy or massage.

Hot tubs should be designed in a manner that restricts access.

Examples include fencing, elevated hot tubs and locked covers.

- » Hot tubs should be equipped with a lockable cover. A combination lock is preferred. Small children can open key locks once they know where the key is stored.

Hot tub pumps, features and lights should be connected to an electric Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlet or preferably at the main breaker.

- » The GFCI should be tested every 30 days and repaired or replaced if not functioning.

Hot tubs should be equipped with an electrical switch to turn off the recirculating pumps.

- » Bathers should have access to this switch in the event of an emergency.
- » The switch should be readily accessible and labelled.

Outlet drains in some hot tubs present a particular danger because their suction is strong enough to hold a person or pull hair or clothing into the outlet. This may result in injury or death.

- » Check all water outlets and jets every 30 days to assess damage and repair or replace as required.
- » Instruct users to stay away from the outlet drains.
- » Instruct users with long hair to take special care, such as tying up their hair while in the hot tub.

Hot tub water should not exceed 40°C (104°F).

Cold plunge pools

A cold plunge pool (tub) is a specially designed, compact body of cold water used for short-term immersion. Water temperature is typically between 10–15°C (50–60°F).

- » **Maintain the environment:** Keep pools, tanks and tubs clean.
- » **Install safety features:** Add handrails for safe entry and exit.
- » **Ensure electrical safety:** Use grounded electrical equipment such as chillers and pumps.
- » **Use proper drain covers:** Secure drain covers to prevent entrapment.
- » **Provide supervision:** Ensure someone is present to supervise and respond to emergencies.
- » **Monitor water quality:** Use chemicals or sanitation systems to maintain clean water.

Wading pools and paddling pools

Wading and paddling pools are shallow water pools less than 0.75 metres deep.

- » **Choose the appropriate location:** Prioritize safety when selecting a site for your paddling pool. Ensure the area is flat and free of sharp objects or hazards such as rocks and sticks.
- » **Cover or empty paddling pools after use:** Applying a pool cover promptly after use prevents unsupervised access by children and animals, and helps keep debris out of the water – contributing to both safety and cleanliness for future usage.
- » Install a fence and gate if the pool cannot be emptied or when full access cannot be safely secured when not in use.

Pool and safety covers

- » Pool covers and safety covers are different.
 - A pool cover floats on the surface or lays loosely over the pool. It is non-weight bearing. Do not consider the pool cover a barrier to entry into the pool.
 - Keep pool covers rolled and stored away from the pool area or ensure they completely cover the pool. Never leave pool covers partially on.
 - Drain or suction off rainwater that collects on the surface of the pool cover. The rainwater can be deep enough to drown a young child.
 - A safety cover is custom-fit to your pool, stretched taut over the pool and securely anchored. It is strong enough to support the weight of people and animals. A safety cover protects children and wildlife during the off-season and should be considered when purchasing a pool cover.

Chemicals and water clarity

Handling and storage

- » Be aware of risks when handling and storing pool chemicals. Use personal protective equipment such as gloves, face shields or eye protection, and an apron. Chemical mismanagement can be fatal.
- » Keep chemicals away from the pool area and locked in an appropriate storage facility.
- » Ensure that only those persons who are knowledgeable in how to handle the chemicals have access to them and their storage facility.
- » Clearly label all chemical containers, especially if a chemical is added to a separate container.
- » Follow the manufacturer's directions for storage and handling.
- » Never leave chemicals outside the storage facility.
- » Never store acid and chlorine in the same location.
- » Ensure Material Safety Data Sheets are available for all chemicals used in the pool, hot tub, etc. These sheets provide information on hazards and instructions on safe handling, storage, first aid and emergency spill procedures.

Water chemistry tests

Test the water daily to ensure that pool water disinfection and pH readings are appropriate and effective.

- » Free available chlorine (FAC) levels should be:
 - **Swimming pool:** between 1.0 ppm and 10 ppm
 - **Hot tub or spa:** between 5.0 ppm and 10.0 ppm
 - **Wading pool:** between 5.0 ppm and 10.0 ppm
 - **Cold plunge pool:** between 5.0 ppm and 10.0 ppm

- » Total Bromine levels should be:
 - **Swimming pool:** between 2.0 ppm and 8.0 ppm
 - **Hot tub or spa:** between 5.0 ppm and 10.0 ppm
 - **Wading pool:** between 5.0 ppm and 10.0 ppm
 - **Cold plunge pool:** between 5.0 ppm and 10.0 ppm
- » pH should be between 7.2 and 7.8
- » Add cyanuric Acid (Stabilizer) in a concentration not greater than 60 mg per litre to outdoor pools to reduce chlorine loss due to sunlight.
- » Add fresh water as required to maintain pool water level due to evaporation or address cloudy or chemical imbalance issues.
- » Consult your local pool supply store for additional water tests and ranges.
- » Be prepared for a pool fouling by ensuring procedures are followed as per Centres for Disease Control. Young children should be encouraged to wear diapers designed for swimming.

Bottom visibility

- » The main drain should be clearly visible at all times from the edge of the swimming pool. Close the pool if it is not visible.
- » Keep the bottom of the pool free of hair clumps, dirt, or other debris.

Fittings, grates and drains

Fittings, grates and drains present a risk of entrapment.

- » Ensure that inlet and outlet fittings, grates, skimmers and the main drain covers are in good condition.
- » Check main drains and all other water inlets and outlets at least every 30 days to ensure that they are secure and cannot be removed from the pool bottom or sides.
- » Turn off the filter system when checking inlets and outlets to prevent suction injuries.
- » Do not insert fingers or hands into the inlet or outlet. Use a tool such as a screwdriver or a small paint brush roller (without the brush) as a hook to test.
- » Instruct children not to play with these devices.
- » Instruct everyone with long hair to tie up their hair and stay clear of outlets or main drains.

Signage

Signage assists users in reinforcing key safety information regarding the backyard pool.

- » Include safety messages on the pool gate prior to access. For example: *Children require parental supervision. Swim with a buddy. Check depth before diving. No glass in pool area.*
- » Clearly mark pool depths on all sides of the pool.
- » Post pool rules in a location where they can be easily seen. See Pool Rules, page 18.

Deck slides

Check water slides to ensure that they are secured to the pool deck.

Post appropriate slide rules, including but not limited to:

- » One person on the slide at a time.
- » Slide in a forward sitting position: no head-first sliding.
- » Wait for the area in front of slide to be cleared before sliding.
- » Do not jump from the top of the slide.

Diving boards

Diving board installations must meet all building codes (e.g., gates, installation at an adequate water depth). Ensure that a diving board is securely fastened to the deck and that its surface is non-slip.

Post appropriate rules, including but not limited to:

- » One person on the board at a time.
- » Bounce once.
- » Use the board only when the entry area is clear of swimmers and floating devices.
- » Dive or jump into the water, swim to the poolside and exit immediately.

Flotation devices and pool toys

Flotation devices and pool toys are fun additions to the backyard pool, but they require close supervision.

- » Water wings and flotation toys are not PFDs or lifejackets. Non-swimmers should wear a lifejacket or PFD approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
- » Flotation devices and pool toys should be in good repair.
- » Do not leave pool toys in the pool when it is not in use, as they may entice young children into the water, increasing the risk of accidental submersion.

Supervise children closely when they are using pool toys, permitting these items in the water only under direct adult observation. Accidents happen when children inadvertently slip or fall from pool toys into deep water.

Pool rules

Family members and guests need to understand that safety is the number one consideration when using the pool. Educate family about the risks associated with certain behaviours and the reasons underlying the pool rules. Discuss potential incidents. Encourage family and guests to adopt a “safety first” mentality.

Set clear expectations about behaviour (e.g., never swim alone, non-swimmers wear PFDs or lifejackets). Do not allow users to behave in ways that endanger their own safety or the safety of others.

Educate swimmers about potential hazard areas such as slippery areas, shallow water (no diving), drop-offs, deep water (caution avoid deep dives).

Recognize the risks associated with drinking alcohol while swimming or supervising others. Restrict anyone who is intoxicated from using the pool.

Establish, post and enforce rules that reflect the features of your pool.

Include the following:

- » No swimming alone.
- » Non-swimmers must be supervised by an adult.
- » Walk – don’t run.
- » Avoid deep dives.
- » Jump – don’t dive – into shallow water.
- » Play safe. Don’t push others into the pool.
- » One person on the board or slide at a time.
- » No glass containers allowed in pool area.

Diving boards and slides require special pool design and supervision. Be vigilant: directly supervise their use.

Be Sun Smart.

Protect yourself, your family and your friends from the hazards of sun exposure. For information, contact the Canadian Cancer Society.

Aquatic spinal injuries

Diving into shallow water is a particularly high-risk activity, and its impact is only partially reflected in fatal drowning statistics. Some people who dive into shallow water suffer a broken neck or catastrophic spinal cord injury and, while they survive the incident, are paralyzed for life.

In the backyard pool, spinal injuries can occur when divers (mostly young and male) hit their head on the bottom – either in the shallow end or when they hit the bottom slope from an entry from the diving board.

Always check the water depth. Adequate depth for diving from the side of a swimming pool is at least 2.75 metres.

Pool supervision

Vigilant, attentive and alert supervision is probably the number one characteristic of a safe backyard pool.

Owners are responsible for ensuring that no individual is ever alone in the pool area. Half of Ontario drowning victims in the five- to-twelve-year-old age group were swimming or playing in the water alone or only with other minors.

Designate a supervisor

Best practice requires that a designated pool supervisor be “on guard” on deck **whenever** there are people in the pool or pool area. Constant supervision to prevent accidents is their primary responsibility.

- » The supervisor should be at least 15 years of age and hold at least the Lifesaving Society's Safeguard, Swim Patrol or Bronze medal certifications.
- » Ensure that the supervisor is trained in emergency procedures, water rescue and first aid (Lifesaving Society Intermediate First Aid course recommended).
- » Provide the supervisor with a sound-signalling device (e.g., whistle) to alert others in the event of an emergency.
- » The supervisor should not leave the pool area for any reason (until relieved by another designated supervisor) while people are in the pool.

Within arms' reach

If you are not "within arms' reach" of your children anytime they are around water, you've gone too far.

Children under five years

Children under five years of age are at high-risk in backyard pools – the most common location of drowning for this age group. They are mobile, curious and the least capable of self-rescue of any age group. Their vulnerability demands heightened vigilance.

Maintain a ratio of no more than two children per adult supervisor whenever these youngsters are in the pool area. Proper supervision requires the adult to be ***within arms' reach*** of these children at all times.

It is recommended that children under five wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) if the adult supervisor is not in the water but monitoring from poolside.

Older children, teens and adults

Safety supervision is also necessary for older children, teens and adults:

- » Adults make up the largest group of drowning victims in Ontario. Young men (25% of fatal drownings) are at especially high risk. Seniors (65 years+) have the highest drowning rate of all age groups and represent 26% of fatal drownings.
- » Children five to 14 years have the lowest rate, but the rate almost doubles for teens 15 to 19 years.

If something goes wrong

When prevention fails, you must be ready and able to respond appropriately in a backyard pool emergency. Preparation and training in recognition and rescue are critical.

What drowning looks like

Drowning is quick and often silent – especially for non-swimmers – who drown without the dramatic splashing or cries for help that people mistakenly expect.

Weak or tired swimmers

Weak or tired swimmers in distress can usually support themselves at the surface for a time, but they need assistance to reach safety. Typically, they have a body position approaching vertical and they are making little forward progress. They may be able to wave or call for help.

Unless someone comes to their aid, this distressed swimmer will become a drowning victim.

Non-swimmers

Non-swimmers do not have the skill or strength to support themselves at the surface. They may or may not struggle. A conscious person who is drowning will stay at or near the surface only for a short time before losing consciousness. Rescue before this happens is vital. This is why vigilant supervision and quick recognition are so important.

Here are some signs to watch for:

- » **Low in the water or submerged:** The person may be vertical in the water with the head tilted back at or below the surface, straining to get their mouth above water to breathe. Because of this, they cannot call for help. The person may also be completely submerged.
- » **Climbing an invisible ladder:** The person may make ineffectual climbing or flapping motions with their arms. No forward progress. Legs provide neither support nor propulsion.
- » **Eyes:** The eyes may be wide with fear.
- » **Hair over the forehead or eyes:** This can be a sign that the person is struggling and unable to move their hair out of the way.

An unconscious drowning victim may be face up or face down, floating at or below the surface. They may be on the bottom.

Emergency procedures

Develop an emergency plan for your pool. Include the following steps and practice them with family members:

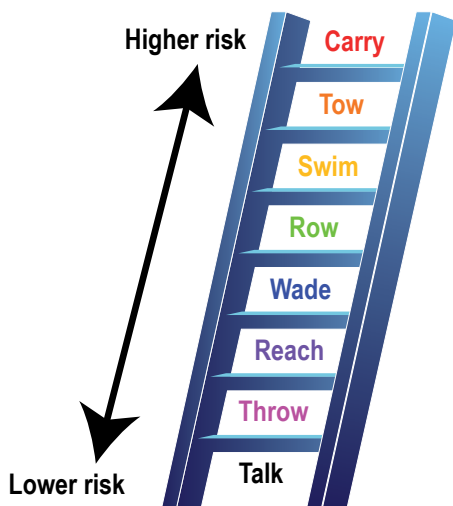
- » Activate your signalling device to alert others and get their assistance.
- » Clear the pool.
- » If the person is unconscious or not breathing, immediately call 911 or your local emergency medical services (EMS) number.
- » Perform the rescue: remove the person from the water and prevent further injury on the deck.
- » Place the person in a semi-prone (recovery) position, unless the type of injury calls for other treatment.
- » Contact EMS: Call 911 if you haven't already done so.
- » Give first aid treatment according to your training.

Rescues – The risk ladder

All water rescues present some level of risk to the rescuer. Lifesaving Society training is based on “the risk ladder approach,” which emphasizes the safety of the rescuer. Rescuers are trained to use the lowest risk rescue technique possible under the circumstances.

“Contact” rescues present greater risk to the rescuer than “non-contact” rescues. In contact rescues, the rescuer is in physical contact with the victim – towing or carrying them to safety. In non-contact rescues, the rescuer extends an aid (preferably buoyant) to the victim and talks, pulls or tows them to safety.

The untrained rescuer's first instinct may be to jump into the pool to assist. This might be justified in the case of an adult swimmer coming to assist a small child, but it is a high-risk option if the victim is an older child, teen or adult in deep water. It is a life-threatening danger for a non-swimmer or weak swimmer to attempt a contact rescue.



In a backyard pool environment, unless the victim is very young or unconscious, a rescuer rarely needs to enter the water. Instead, opt for these low-risk techniques:

- » **Talk:** Get the person's attention, calm them and give them instruction on what to do.
- » **Throw:** Use any buoyant aid like a ring buoy, lifejacket or PFD, kickboard or pool noodle.
- » **Reach:** Extend your reach from poolside using a reaching pole, buoyant aid or pool noodle.
- » **Wade:** If you must enter the water, remain in shallow water and extend your reach as above. Alternatively, slip into the water holding onto the pool edge or ladder and extend your reach as above.

First aid

Drowning victim:

- » **Call 911:** Dial 911 or your local emergency number immediately. Provide your location and describe the situation.
- » **Check for breathing:** Open the airway and check for breathing for five seconds. If the person is not breathing, give two breaths and begin CPR.
- » **Perform CPR:** Continue CPR until medical help arrives.

Training and education

Training and education are crucial for backyard pool safety because they teach vital water competence, emergency response skills and awareness of water hazards, which can prevent drowning and injury.

Through affiliate members across the province, the Lifesaving Society offers training programs from learn-to-swim through advanced lifesaving, lifeguarding and leadership. Contact your local pool for more information and to register for lessons. Visit www.lifesavingsociety.com to learn more about the Society's training programs.

Learn to swim

Basic swimming ability is a fundamental requirement in any meaningful attempt to eliminate drowning in Canada.

Our [Swim for Life program](#) is a learn-to-swim progression incorporating valuable Water Smart® education that lasts a lifetime.

The Society's [Swim to Survive](#) training teaches the minimum skills needed to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. People of all ages should be able to perform the Swim to Survive standard.

Safeguard

[Safeguard](#) offers safety supervision training for guardians who accompany groups of young people to pools or waterfronts. The course stresses the responsibility undertaken by these group leaders for safeguarding the young people in their care even when under lifeguard supervision.

Safeguard focuses on water safety awareness, accident prevention and the principles of aquatic safety supervision. Safeguard teaches participants how to identify hazards and at-risk behaviours, how to recognise potential victims, and how to respond safely in an aquatic emergency.

Safeguard training is designed for swimmers and non-swimmers alike.

**Shop the Lifesaving Society's store:
Lifeguarddepot.com**

The Lifesaving Society offers the safety equipment and water-quality testing equipment you need for your backyard pool.

Equipment includes 20-inch ring buoys with throwing lines, adjustable reaching poles with hooks, hooks to hang all of these items, personal first aid kits (ideal for your backyard pool), Twist-N-Lock buoys and line to define swim areas and drop-offs, and much more.

Water-quality test kits from Taylor Technologies guarantee accurate readings of free available chlorine or bromine, pH, total alkalinity and calcium hardness. They offer basic Dip-N-Read test strips in resealable containers for daily testing, or more complex test kits for more accurate readings where chlorine levels are high or water temperatures are spa-like.

Shop www.lifeguarddepot.com or call toll-free: 1-844-647-7033

First aid

As a WSIB Approved Training Provider, Lifesaving Society [First Aid courses](#) teach you to deal with injuries and medical emergencies at home, work or play. The Lifesaving Society offers:

- » Basic First Aid
- » Intermediate First Aid
- » Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR & AED)
- » Anaphylaxis Rescuer
- » Airway Management

Lifesaving courses

The Society's [lifesaving programs](#) include the [Canadian Swim Patrol](#) and the [Bronze medal](#) awards. By developing proficiency in lifesaving, resuscitation and water rescue skills, these awards provide swimmers with life skills that will last a lifetime and can be used as "building blocks" toward further first aid and lifeguard training.

Backyard pool safety clinics

To find community backyard pool safety clinics in Canada, you can contact local agencies such as your city's recreation department or public health unit, which offer water safety education and programs. Register for courses, which often cover water safety, accident prevention, and emergency preparedness for pool owners and users.

Backyard pool safety inspection checklist

Pool information

Date of inspection:	
Time of inspection:	
Inspector:	
Pool address:	
Shallow end depth:	
Deep end depth:	

Safe use of your pool

Supervision

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
No person is ever alone in the pool or surrounding area.				
Adult is within arms' reach when children are in or near the water.				
A ratio of two children per adult supervisor is maintained for young children and non-swimmers.				
Children 5 years of age and under are wearing lifejackets or approved PFDs if the supervising adult is not in the water.				
Lifejackets or approved PFDs are provided for non-swimmers and those with limited swimming ability.				
Designated supervisor is present at all times when people are in or around the pool.				

Designated supervisor

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Designated supervisor is at least 15 years of age.				
Designated supervisor is constantly supervising backyard pool users.				

Backyard pool features and equipment

Fencing and gates

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Fencing is secure.				
Fencing encloses the pool on all sides.				
Fence is a minimum of 1.5 m high.				
Fencing is difficult to climb.				
Barrier alarm is installed and working.				
Gate is secure.				
Gate is self-closing.				
Gate self-latches.				
Sign reads "This property contains a swimming pool. Do not enter without permission."				

Pool area

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Pool area is clean.				
Pool area is clear of obstacles and hazardous materials.				
Maintenance materials and equipment are safely stored.				
When the pool is in use, the light level at the water surface is at least 100 lux.				

Safety equipment

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Buoy line to identify the drop-off is secured to the pool sides.				
Buoy line is floating at the surface.				
Reaching pole is present and in good repair.				
Ring buoy or throwing aid is present and in good repair.				
A whistle or sound-signalling device is present and in good repair.				
Fully stocked first aid kit is present.				
Telephone is nearby.				

In-ground pools

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Ladder design does not permit swimming between or through the submerged ladder rungs.				
Drain cover is secure.				
Grounded electrical equipment is operational and tested.				

Above-ground pools

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Ladder is removed when pool not in use.				
Ladder is in a locked location that children cannot access.				
Ladder design does not permit swimming between or through the submerged ladder rungs.				
Access surrounding the above-ground pool is restricted.				
Grounded electrical equipment is operational and tested.				

Hot tubs

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Designed to restrict access.				
Cover is lockable.				
Temperature is at or below 40°C				
Electrical equipment is grounded.				
Drain cover is secure.				

Cold plunge pools

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Handrails are present.				
Grounded electrical equipment is operational and tested.				
Drain cover is secure.				

Wading pools and paddling pools

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Cover is on or pool is emptied when not in use.				

Pool covers

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Safety cover is installed during off-season.				
Pool cover is rolled and stored away when pool is in use.				
Cover is drained or suctioned off after rain or annual snow melt.				

Chemicals and water clarity

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Chemicals are labelled, handled and stored properly.				
Chlorine and acid are stored separately.				
Chemical test is conducted regularly.				
Free Available Chlorine levels: » Swimming pool: 1.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm » Hot tub or spa: 5.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm » Wading pool: 5.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm » Cold plunge pool: 5.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm				
Total Bromine levels: » Swimming pool: 2.0 ppm to 8.0 ppm » Hot tub or spa: 5.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm » Wading pool: 5.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm » Cold plunge pool: 5.0 ppm to 10.0 ppm				
pH is between 7.2 and 7.8				
Bottom of the pool is free of visible material.				
Main drain is clearly visible.				

Fittings, grates and drains

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Fittings, grates and drains are secured and in good repair.				
Main drain and other inlets and outlets are checked at least every 30 days.				

Signage

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Pool depths are clearly identified.				
Pool rules are posted.				

Deck slides

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Slide is secured and in good repair.				
Slide rules are posted.				

Diving boards

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Board is securely fastened to the deck and has a non-slip surface.				
Diving rules are posted.				

Flotation devices and pool toys

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Pool toys are not left in the pool when not in use.				
Flotation devices and pool toys are in good repair.				

Pool rules

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Expectations about safe behaviours are communicated to family and guests.				
Pool rules are set, explained and enforced.				

Training and education

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Homeowners know how to swim.				
People supervising have a minimum of the Safeguard certification.				
Someone at the pool is trained in first aid.				
Someone at the pool has lifesaving training.				
Homeowner has participated in a backyard pool safety clinic.				
Babysitter and family providing childcare in the absence of the owner are aware of the rules and risks, and have the skills to respond to or rescue a child in the water.				

If something goes wrong

What drowning looks like

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
We understand what drowning looks like.				

Emergency procedures

Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Emergency procedures have been developed and practiced.				



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts