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## **Are You Ready for Some Fun in the Water?**

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*"Dear Mom and Dad,*

*It's week 3! I can't believe camp is almost over. Do I have to go home?!?*

*This week I got to go out on the water with Sharon. She's the Water Activities Instructor. It was so much fun! She didn't even make us wear life jackets. They were too small anyway. Then, we all got to practice something called CPR when Alice fell off the boat and drank too much lake water. Alice says she's going to switch activities for this week. I don't know why.*

*Anyway, I've got to go. We're gonna sneak away at dinnertime to meet Sharon at the dock. She promised to take us boat racing with her and one of the other counselors!*

*Talk to you next week. Love, Tommy"*

For many kids, a large part of camp will be spent in the water. With warm weather and sunny skies, it's the perfect time to take advantage of the lakes and pools that are part of many camp activities.

While swimming, snorkeling, and other water sports can be great fun, they each come with their risks that can turn an enjoyable experience at camp into a terrible event.

### **Swimming Safety Tips**

Make sure that all campers swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards, and ensure that all lifeguards and staff take a first aid and CPR/AED course. Check out ARM's Solutions article

on [Camp Activity Safety](#) for more information on lifeguards. The [American Red Cross](#) reminds campers always to swim with a buddy; do not allow anyone to swim alone. Never leave a child unattended near water.

Teach children always to ask permission to go near the water. Have young children, or inexperienced swimmers, wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket around water. But do not rely on life jackets alone. Install pool barriers that enclose the entire pool area and are at least 4-feet high. Latches to close off the pool area should be high enough to be out of a small child's reach.

## Boating Safety Tips

Camps that have access to a lake or other large body of water could hold many other activities other than swimming. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, in 2013, 77 percent of all fatal boating accident victims drowned. Of those who drowned, 84 percent were not wearing a life jacket. In 2014, the U.S. Coast Guard reported **78 percent of fatal boating accident victims drowned**. Of those drowning victims, **84 percent were not wearing a life jacket**.

Here are a few tips from Safe Kids Worldwide on boating safety:

1. Always have your children wear a life jacket approved by the U.S. Coast Guard while on boats, around open bodies of water, or when participating in water sports.
2. Make sure life jackets fit snugly. Have the child make a "touchdown" signal by raising both arms straight up; if the jacket hits the child's chin or ears, it may be too big, or the straps may be too loose.
3. Take a few extra precautions to keep young children warm. Infants and young kids are at a higher risk for hypothermia. If children seem cold or are shivering, wrap them tightly in a dry blanket or towel.
4. Learn CPR. Local hospitals, fire departments, and recreation departments offer CPR training.
5. Teach children that swimming in open water is not the same as swimming in a pool. They need to be aware of uneven surfaces, river currents, ocean undertow, and changing weather.
6. Do not use swimming aids such as water wings or noodles in place of a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device.
7. Get a vessel safety check every year for free from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadrons.
8. Make sure there's a working carbon monoxide alarm on any motorboat to alert passengers to any buildup of toxic fumes from the engine.

Although these tips are geared towards boating, many of these can be applied to other water activities. Life jackets should be worn while on boats, and also while on jet skis, tubing, skiing, and other water sports.

Riders of jet skis should obey boating safety rules and the directions in the manufacturer's Owner's Manual while using the vehicle. This would include using the appropriate safety gear and wet suits to avoid being injured if they are ejected from the vehicle during operation.