



Water Safety..... **Information**

August 2006

Child Holiday Swimming Pool Safety

Over the last six years 30 children under 10 years-old have drowned in holiday swimming pools abroad - RoSPA believes that all of these deaths could have been prevented.

Each year millions of Britons jet off to sunnier climes. This fact sheet gives a brief overview of a numerically small but significant problem of which families should be aware. It highlights the key trends since 2000, and offers some simple advice for parents to consider **before** they book a holiday, and points to remember **during** the holiday.

The under-10's drowned in the following places:

- Hotels – 12
- Holiday villas / homes – 8
- Campsites - 2
- Unknown - 8

More than half of these victims were under 4 years old.

Key Facts behind these drownings

Toddlers (0 - 3 years) - Two to three years are most at risk. In many cases the toddler wandered away from parents and fell into an unsupervised pool.

Young children (4-5 years) – Some drownings happened after the child was last seen playing in the water, or playing near to water. In many cases parents were unaware of the problem until the child was found in the water (most commonly a hotel swimming pool).

Older children (6-9 years) - In all of these cases the children were swimming.

Parental supervision - Drowning children don't cry out for help and wave to be rescued - they disappear under the surface – often unseen and unheard. Adults need to be vigilant whenever a child is in or near a pool.

Lifeguards - Many hotel pools will not have lifeguards on duty. Of those that do have lifeguards – their roles are often combined with other duties. Many pools will have 'pool attendants' who give out towels and make sure the site is clean. Their main response is usually after the event has happened as opposed to the UK where a lifeguard's main role is focused to prevent incidents occurring before the event.



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Holiday villas - If you book a private property – you will have to be the lifeguard. A number of holiday pool drownings have occurred in villas during the evening (or early morning) where the child has gone outside without their parent's knowledge and ended up in the pool. It is impossible to be awake and supervise all the time. Check to see if your villa has safety barriers (permanent or otherwise) that will stop young children from getting into the pool without your help.

First & last day - A significant number of the holiday pool drownings are reported to happen on the first or the last day of the holiday. RoSPA believes that parents may be less vigilant because of distractions surrounding arrival at the holiday destination and packing up to go home. Children will be keen to explore at this time and may easily slip away.

Key points for parents to consider:

Before you go:

- Check the safety arrangements in advance
- Teach children never to swim alone
- Be cautious about booking villas that do not have safety fencing
- Take a first aid course – know how to resuscitate a child
- Ask your travel company if the hotel pool has a lifeguard

When you are there:

- Actively supervise all young children near water
- Choose pools that are fenced with locking gates
- Even if a pool has a lifeguard – know where your children are, and what they are doing in the water
- Let children take swimming classes whilst on holiday – they are a great way of gaining water confidence and learning essential water safety skills.
- Inflatables are not a substitute for supervision or swimming ability

Rules for children:

Water safety rules for children:

- Never swim alone
- Do not dive into unknown depths of water, and only jump feet first into water
- Do not push or jump onto others
- Know where to get help in an emergency



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What is RoSPA doing?

To reduce the number of UK tourists drowning abroad is a RoSPA key issue. We have conducted research into this problem and presented our findings Europe wide. We are working with key partners both in the UK and abroad to actively target this problem.

Other information:

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is a registered charity, which was established over 80 years ago. RoSPA's mission is to save lives and reduce injuries. More information can be found on www.rospa.com or by email at help@rospa.com.

Drowning fatalities source: RoSPA drowning database 2000 –2005

This information sheet is available online at:

http://www.rospa.com/leisuresafety/information/childholiday_swimmingpools.htm