



There's something magical about a swimming pool. The smell of chlorine, the alluring dark blue water of the deep end and the tasty treats in the vending machine; all are an irresistible combination to kids. Summer in the Denver metro area provides families with almost endless aquatic opportunities and now is the time to jump in with both feet! But before you take the plunge, here are some things you can do to help your kids swim safely this season.

Splash Into Summer!

Metro Denver's Best Pools and Water Parks *Karen Barton*

Water Safety Tips

Make sure children are well-supervised.

Lifeguards are trained to watch for dangerous situations, struggling swimmers and people who have slipped under the water, but they can't always see everything the second it happens. Ann Shidler of Starfish Swim School warns that the ratio of kids to lifeguards is too high to be safe, and you should always remain with your child. Just being near the edge of the pool is often not enough. "Parents shouldn't have their head in a book while at the pool," says Shidler, a former registered nurse who has been teaching water safety skills to children for 18 years. "Those eyes need to remain on the child at all times."

In public pools where the policy is "swim at your own risk," pairing kids up into "swimming buddies" is a great idea, but it's no substitute for an adult watching from the deck. According to Lori Kaupp, Water Safety Manager at Elitch Gardens' Island Kingdom water park, "The presence of a certified lifeguard is always your best bet, but at a pool with no lifeguard, constant adult supervision is essential." Even responsible older children sometimes get carried away with

their own fun in the pool and forget they're in charge of little ones. Most swimmers can't shout or wave when they get in trouble in the water, so even a few moments of inattention can have devastating consequences.

If your young swimmer hasn't been in the water since last summer, go into the pool yourself and see how well he does in the water. If he struggles in water that's over his head, stay there to keep an eye on him, or ask the lifeguards not to allow him to go into the deep end. Talk to your child about staying at a depth where he's comfortable, and sign him up for some lessons if his skills need work. Lori Kaupp suggests finding a facility where swimming instructors are certified by either Ellis & Associates or the American Red Cross. Shidler, of Starfish Swim School says that the core basic safety skills need to be taught before a swim instructor ever teaches the first stroke."

Don't count on water wings, life jackets or other flotation devices to keep your kids safe in the water. Dawn Rachjaibun, Program Manager of Aquatics at the City and County of

Broomfield cautions, "Flotation devices will not prevent a child from drowning. They are simply floats for fun and a child shouldn't be on a float if the child has no swimming skills. "The danger with these toys is that they can create a false sense of security for children and parents. It's too easy for a child to paddle out into deep water and then flip over or let go of the float.

According to the American Red Cross, which trains more than 170,000 lifeguards each year, the only life jacket you should rely on to keep your kids safe is a Coast Guard-approved PFD (personal flotation device). PFDs approved by the Coast Guard have a stamp with the weight range they're designed for. Make sure you have the right size for your child. Parents should even go a step further, says Shidler, "A story on NBC's Dateline showed that, while any Coast Guard-approved PFD will keep you afloat, not all are guaranteed to turn an unconscious wearer face up in the water. Parents should read the enclosed literature and disclaimers that come with the life jackets to make that determination." Even with a PFD, the Red Cross

suggests that parents get into the water with their kids and keep them within arm's reach at all times.

Don't take unnecessary risks.

When I was a lifeguard, I frequently saw parents trying to swim out into deep water with children on their backs or shoulders. Many parents also want their children to jump to them from the diving board or the edge of the deep end. These behaviors are very dangerous because even a small child can push an adult down under the water if they panic and follow their instinct to climb to "higher ground". After taking a foot to my own face when I was a new swimming instructor, I know that even a three-year-old can pack a punch when he's jumping from the side of the pool. Always use your common sense and obey the lifeguard if he or she asks you not to engage in a certain activity.

Remember that your attitude will rub off on your child. If you act nervous or afraid in the water, your child will pick up the idea that the pool is something to be afraid of. If you show that you're comfortable and enjoy the water, they'll know that it's okay. Make sure they know safety rules and possible

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dangers, but don't go overboard with the warnings. If your child accidentally slips under the water or falls in when she wasn't expecting it, pull her out and act like she just did something wonderful. If you say, "Oh, Susie, that was great! You swam underwater just like a big girl," you'll usually get a proud smile. On the other hand, a panicked, "Oh my gosh, are you okay?" will almost always produce tears.

Swimming is not only fun, it's also great exercise, a popular competitive sport and a survival skill. Making sure your children are educated in water safety and swimming will serve them well throughout their lives. So get out there and enjoy the great pools, water parks and reservoirs that metro Denver has to offer. Your kids will love you for it!

Water Fun in the Denver Metro Area

Indoor Pools

Apex Center
www.northjeffco.org
 13150 W 72nd Ave
 Arvada, 303-424-7733

The Apex Center offers over 23,000 square feet of indoor aquatic fun. Two 150 foot water slides that wrap in and outside the building are a blast to ride either on your back or on a tube. A tethered log walk is a great way to test your balance, and if you slip...well it's a good thing you're wearing a swimsuit. The water playground with its collection of slides, ladders, fountains and geysers and the vortex pool that spins you around and around is a great place to experience water at its wettest. Family locker rooms and plenty of deck space for a picnic make this the ideal swimming hot spot.

Margaret W. Carpenter Recreation Center
www.ci.thornton.co.us
 11151 Colorado Blvd.
 Thornton, 303-255-7800
 Your kids will love the gentle, rolling

waves at Carpenter Recreation Center's pool. When the waves are off, they'll enjoy the diving board. The zero-depth entry is perfect for little ones, and there's plenty of deep water for more adventurous skilled swimmers. The facility also has a dry sauna and a steam room.

Paul Derda Broomfield Recreation Center
www.broomfieldrecreation.com
 13201 Lowell Blvd.
 Broomfield, 303-460-6900

Waterfalls, vortex pools, and huge water slides are just a few reasons to visit this pool. In the center of all the wet wild fun is an adorable spongy butterfly slide perfect for little fish. Swimmers that wish to do a little less whooshing and a lot more exercise can enjoy the separate lap lanes. If you're all feeling a little chilled, the family hot tub is just the right temperature in which to relax.

The Trails Recreation Center
www.aprd.org
 16799 E. Lake Ave.
 Centennial, 303-269-8400

The aquatic facility at The Trails boasts the best of all swimming worlds. The zero-depth entry recreation pool has a lazy river with a gentle current, two big water slides and a spray garden that sprays and dumps water in all directions.

Parents can swim in the peaceful lap pool on the other side of the glass wall that separates it from the recreation pool, or they can relax in the dry sauna or steam room. You can pay a daily admission fee or save money with one of the many passes available.

The Ridge Recreation Center and Pools
www.ifoohills.org
 6613 S Ward St.
 Littleton, 303-409-2333

Get ready for a day of play in the leisure pool with a current channel, tot play structure and slides. A large therapy pool is available for users with special needs. Families are welcomed with family cabanas, birthday parties and private lessons.

The Wheat Ridge Recreation Center
www.ci.wheatridge.co.us.com
 4005 Kipling St
 Wheat Ridge, 303-231-1300

Water basketball, a lazy river and a 120 foot water slide with tons of twists and turns will delight the family looking for a day full of fun. Play gadgets, dumping tumble baskets and a small frog slide will ensure more wet and wild fun. Don't forget to leave time to visit the warm temperature leisure pool and spacious lap lanes.

Dive Deeper into Water Safety

A huge need exists to teach young children water safety. According to the Safe Kids worldwide organization, drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death in children ages 1 to 14.

- For what you need to know on drain covers, pool/hot tub safety, plus beach and boating safety, go to www.usa.safekids.org/water
- Do you have your own backyard pool with proper barrier fencing? Should you take your 10-month-old on a boat? These and many other safety questions are answered at www.babycenter.com, in articles found under "water safety."
- Legislation is now being designed on Capitol Hill to offer incentive grants to states that pass laws requiring safeguards to prevent drowning and the entrapment or entanglement of kids around pool and spa drains. Keep informed on these and other important water issues at www.swimdenver.com. Starfish Swim School keeps parents abreast of the latest in water safety.

Outdoor Pools

Deer Creek Park and Pool
www.foothills.org
 8637 S Garrison St.
 Littleton, 720-981-8393

Beach entry, water and spray features, 150 foot slides and lap lanes are just a few exciting features Deer Creek offers. If you're hungry after all your swimming, enjoy a snack at the concession stand operated by Robert's Italian Deli. Discounted summer passes are available for unlimited use.

H2O'Brien Pool
www.parkeronline.org
 10795 Victorian Dr.
 Parker, 720-851-5873

H2O'Brien pool is a wonderful outdoor facility with two large water slides for big kids, a waterworks play structure and a spray garden. Young children will enjoy the zero-depth entry, and older kids and parents can get a workout in the lap pool. You'll also find lots of shade and lounge chairs on the deck if you prefer to sit back and watch your kids enjoy the water. Admission charged. Guests under three or over 62 are admitted free.

Weaver Hollow Park and Pool

www.foothills.org
 12750 W Stanford Ave.
 Morrison, 720-981-3108
www.foothills.org

Weaver Hollow boasts dizzying 150 foot body flume inner tube water slides for the young and young at heart. The youngest in your crowd will enjoy the shipwreck boat tot slide and water spray ground. Discounted summer passes are available for unlimited use.

Water Parks

Pirates Cove Family Aquatic Center
www.englewoodgov.org
 1225 W. Belleview Ave.
 Englewood, 303-762-COVE (2683)

Ahoy ye Mateys! Welcome to a swashbuckling good time at our outdoor family aquatic center. Pirates Cove offers a leisure pool with a large play structure, a 25-meter, 6-lane pool, a 35-foot slide tower with three slides, a lazy river, concessions and more for your summer fun. Pirates Cove is open daily, May 27 to August 20, 10:30 am to 6:30 pm and weekends only August 26-September 4,

10:30am-6:30pm. Daily admission starts at \$5. Season and family passes are also available.

Six Flags Elitch Garden Island Kingdom Water Park

www.sixflags.com
 2000 Elitch Cir.
 Denver, 303-595-4386

This water park boasts more than 11 rides and water attractions. Immerse yourself in the Commotion Ocean wave pool. Slip and slide down some of the tallest and largest water slides in Denver. Children will have a great time navigating their way through the Hook's Lagoon water tree house. When you're ready to slow down the pace, take a ride in Castaway Creek the lazy river that spirals around the water park.

Splash

www.ci.golden.co.us
 3151 Illinois St.
 Golden, 303-277-8700

Splash Aquatic Park is perfect for families with small children. They have the right size water side for everyone. A playground built right in the water is so



Pirates Cove Family Aquatic Center

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 Englewood, CO 80120

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much fun; your kids will never want to leave. The anticipation of a turn bucket pouring down cool water every few minutes is a favorite pastime at Splash. The separate lap lanes and diving boards are inviting to older children and adults. Plenty of lounging chairs and shaded areas make this a fantastic place to bring a picnic lunch. Don't forget to get your 2 for 1 coupon on the previous page.

The Broomfield Bay
www.broomfieldrecreation.com
250 Lamar St
Broomfield, 303-464-5520

Not only is this water park family friendly it's also easy on the wallet. Tons of body and inner tube slides keep everyone busy. If plunging from slides isn't your thing, visit the fountains that sporadically erupt in different splashy patterns. The shallow pools and easy-to-manuever

small slides in the kiddie park are perfect for little ones. Grassy areas and lots of lounging chairs make great spots for picnic lunches or snacks from the full service concession stand.

Water World
www.waterworldcolorado.com
1800 W 89th Ave
Denver, 303-427-7873

One of America's largest water parks with more than 40 rides and attractions. The classic favorites like the wave pool and enormous water slides attract thrill seekers and sun worshipers from all over the city. For the younger kids', visit Wally World, where you can find kid-sized slides and shallow water. Free parking and picnic lunches are another reason to take your family to Water World this summer. Save \$5 on admission with the coupon on page 25. ❖

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www.swimlabs.com 303.798.SWIM (7946)

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