

Recreational Water Toys

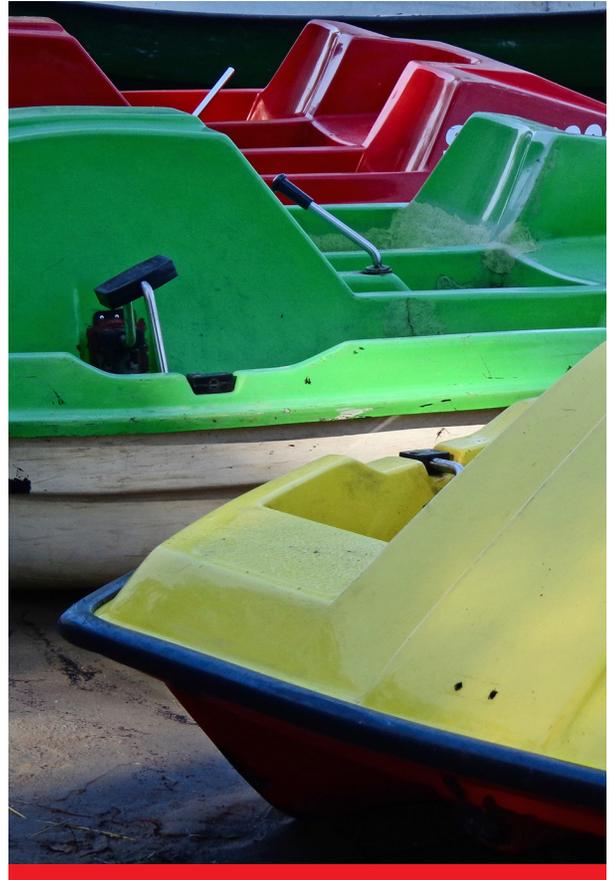
This summer countless Canadians will use recreational water toys, like inflatables, motorized toys or wakeboards. Sadly, tragic and preventable water-related fatalities occur each year. From 1991 to 2010 more than 3,300 Canadians drowned or died from a water-related incident while boating. This includes 19 people who died in pedal or paddle-boat incidents, and 8 who were being towed behind a power boat (e.g. tubing, water skiing). In this 20-year period, 50 Canadians have drowned or died in a water-related incident while using recreational toys like pool noodles, inflatables or recreational rafts.

Tips for using recreational water toys:

- **Always play with a buddy:** When going out on the water make sure you are with another responsible swimmer. Children should be with an adult. Water toys of any size are not a substitute for adult supervision.
- **Check the weather conditions before you go:** Make sure you are aware of the weather and water conditions and any hazards that may affect your activities.
- **Actively supervise kids:** The absence of adult supervision is a factor in most child fatalities. Always actively watch children around water, even if they can swim, and stay close enough to assist your children if they get into trouble while they are in the water.
- **Non-swimmers should wear a lifejacket at all times:** This will help your child to stay at the surface in the event of an unexpected fall into the water. The child should practice righting him/herself and moving while wearing the lifejacket in a controlled environment. Lifejackets and PFDs are not a substitute for adult supervision.
- **Don't fall for peer pressure:** Peer pressure, can significantly influence behavior and encourage Canadians to act in unsafe ways. Don't allow anyone to persuade you to do something you think might be dangerous or that you don't have the skills or training for.
- **Take all toys out of pools when you get out:** Children are often attracted to toys floating in the pool and can easily fall in if trying to reach for one. Help your kids by removing temptation; make sure pools are clear of toys when people are out of the water.

Tips for using towed toys like tubes, skis, wakeboards or banana boats:

- **Regularly check tow ropes for wear and tear:** It is recommended that tow ropes be buoyant and contain bright colours so that they can easily be seen in the water. Tow ropes must be maintained and should not have any rips or tears in the fabric. Use the appropriate size and type of rope for the activity you are doing.
- **Always wear appropriate lifejackets:** This includes PFDs and Lifejackets that are approved by Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard or Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Ski belts are not enough to keep adults or children safe.
- **Always have a driver and a spotter:** This must be two different people so that they can each concentrate on their roles.
- **Have pre-established communication/hand signals:** both the spotter and the person being towed need to know what it means to speed up, slow down, stop, go in, etc.



Tips for using ride-on toys like scooters, stand up paddle boards, paddle boats or wind surfers:

- **WEAR your lifejacket:** When it comes to lifejackets, keeping one close by isn't close enough. Choose to wear your lifejacket and make every water activity a safe one.
- **Know your swimming ability:** Many of these activities will involve being in the water, and usually away from shore. Be aware of your swimming ability in the event that you fall off or lose your craft.
- **Use the safety leash:** In the case of a paddle board, surf board or wind surfer, ensure that you have a leash attached to you and your board.
- **Stay with your craft:** In the event that you get into trouble, always stay with your board or craft.
- **Don't drink and play:** There is no safe way to mix alcohol or drugs with water activities.

Tips for using inflatable toys like swim platforms, slides, trampolines and party islands:

- **Secure or anchor your water toy:** Your water toy should be secured, away from a high-traffic boating area, to avoid drifting with waves, tides or winds.
- **Check the label for weight or rider restrictions:** Never overload a water toy.
- **Don't swim around or under water toys:** Check regularly to ensure swimmers have not become trapped beneath them.

- **Children should only play on water toys with others of similar weight or size:** Mixing younger children with older ones may result in injury.
- **Remove all jewelry, watches, shoes, glasses, etc. before using water toys.**

Tips for using swimming and training aids:

- **To avoid injuries, always warm up first before using training aids like kickboards, paddles, pull buoys, fins, etc.**
- **Masks and snorkels require training in order to use correctly.** Contact your local scuba centre for more information about proper use and care of snorkel or scuba equipment.
- **Mermaid tails can be lots of fun for children and adults alike!** Mermaid tails can be dangerous if used by inexperienced swimmers because they bind together the legs of the wearer, which can negatively impact their ability to float and maneuver in the water. Always directly supervise any swimmer wearing a mermaid tail. Contact your local pool to inquire whether they offer mermaid tail classes.

Learn more about water safety and other health and safety tips at: redcross.ca/swim

