

SUMMER

Splash

3 Beach *and*
Pool TIPS

It's that time again....time to get ready for that May 24th SPLASH into summer! May 24th tends to be the first plunge of the year for many Bermudians. As parents, it's time to prepare and consider beach and pool safety tips to make it a fun and healthy summer for the entire family. As everyone knows, a 'day at the beach' or 'chillin by the pool' can be anything but fun if we're unprepared. A little forethought and preparation can go a long way toward a safe and healthy afternoon or vacation on the water.

Teaching your child to swim and encouraging him/her to swim regularly can have significant benefits for both physical and mental health and safety. On a hot day, swimming is a good way to keep cool while encouraging a healthy level of physical and social activity. Swimming enhances physical health as it provides an excellent cardiovascular workout that promotes heart and lung health, improves strength and flexibility, and increases stamina. It also improves balance and posture while putting less strain on joints and connective tissues than other forms of exercise. Swimming is cited as an effective way to prevent childhood obesity. Swimming can also improve your child's mental and emotional health as the natural buoyancy of the water is more relaxing than other types of exercise. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) found swimming can also improve overall mood, and help combat depression. And equally important, knowing how to swim can save your child's life. According to KidsHealth.org, drowning is the second-leading cause of death for people between the ages of 5 and 24. By teaching your child to swim, he/she will gain confidence and valuable experience in the water, which will greatly reduce the risk of an emergency (e.g. accidentally falling into the

water or getting pulled into deep water by a rip current at the beach). It will also enable your child to enjoy other water-based activities like snorkeling, kayaking, paddle boarding, windsurfing and sailing, to name a few.

Tip #1: Swimming: Practice Beach and Pool Safety

Children LOVE the water and generally can't wait to jump right in! That's good, and we certainly don't want them to fear the water, but we do want them to develop a healthy 'respect' and be aware of the potential dangers that lie therein. We are blessed in Bermuda to be surrounded by a most beautiful, safe and generally warm ocean! There are numerous programs around to teach children how to swim from toddlers (e.g. Aquamania Moms and Tots and Swimming Instincts) and up. These programs are wonderful for helping children enjoy swimming as they practice skills from blowing bubbles, floating and treading water, and learning specific strokes that help them learn to swim. Having float boards, noodles and other floatation devices around is always a good practice; however, they are not substitutes for swimming lessons or adult supervision. We owe it to our children for them to know how to swim when their island home is Bermuda! If they begin to like swimming, there are several really good swim clubs on the island (i.e. Harbour, Sharks and Dolphins) where they can continue to improve their skills. Other tips to remember to keep our families safe around the water include:

- NEVER leave children unsupervised at the beach or near a pool – they can get into difficulty in a heartbeat
- If you are at a hotel or renting a house with a pool, or even have a neighbor with a pool, make sure it is properly fenced or gated so children cannot access
- Swim at a beach with a lifeguard, particularly if you have a group of children with you, as there will be more eyes on your children and more help nearby
- When at the beach, take the rip-tide or current warnings seriously, and don't let children swim at these times. As part of your water safety training, remind children not to fight a strong current, but to swim parallel to the shore or tread water

Tip #2: Keeping Cool

Bermuda's high heat and humidity can be a deadly combination, especially for children. Overheating and dehydration can happen quickly, so we must make sure that water is available at all times, and that children take a drink at least every half hour. Packing healthier and more nutritious snacks for your family also helps. Fruit is always a good choice as it aids hydration, while trail mix, granola bars, cheese sticks and dried fruit are also good options. Ensuring that there is adequate shade is important for providing protection from the heat. It's a good idea to take umbrellas or small tents to provide periodic relief from the heat in case there is no natural shade.

Tip #3: Smart Sun Protection

Bermuda's sun can be intense and so we all need to protect our skin as skin cancer rates are increasing. This includes melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer that is being seen in increasing numbers in children and teens. Dermatologists recommend choosing a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, which contains a physical

blocker such as zinc oxide or titanium and blocks 97% of the UVB rays. Most importantly we must remember to liberally apply the sunscreen before we go out into the sun, and then we must reapply it, even if it is water resistant, every 90 minutes. Lotions tend to provide better cover than sprays, but if a spray is used it should be sprayed close to the skin and then rubbed in. Sun protective clothing is also important

to protect the skin, and can include sun/swim shirts, sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats!

Enjoy your summer SPLASH!

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