

# Toddler water safety:

## Do big people always know best?



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## Background

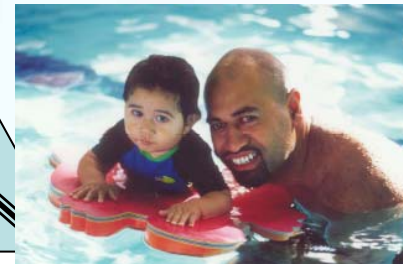
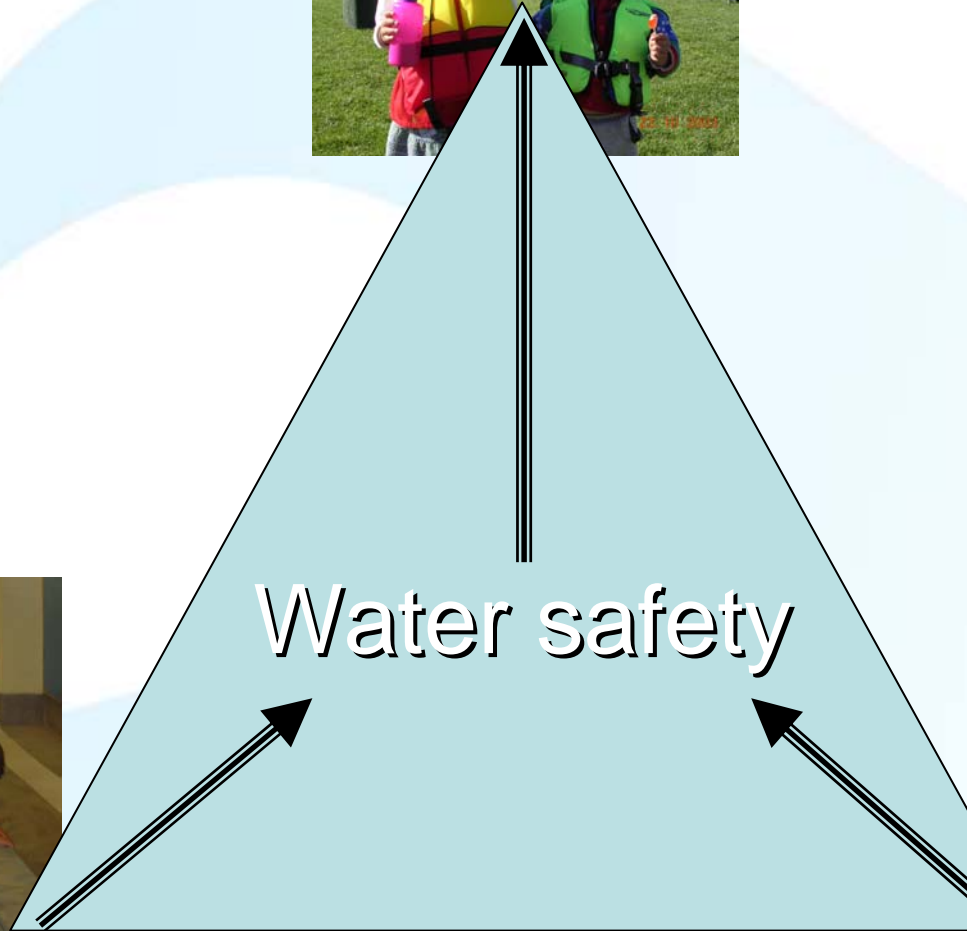
- **Between 1980-2002, 342 drowning incidents in the 1-4 year age group**
- **Annual age specific rate of 6.9 per 100,000, the highest of any age group in OECD countries**
- **309 (90%) classified as immersion accidents**
- **Most common site was domestic pools (37%)**  
**26% occurred in open water locations (15% still water, 11% waterways)**
- **68% were male**

**Source: Child and Youth Mortality Review (2005). *Circumstances surrounding drowning in those under 25 in New Zealand (1980-2002)*. Wellington: CYMR and WSNZ.**



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## The child-parent-teacher triad



## Purpose

The purpose of this seminar is:

- To report on how parents perceive toddler risk of drowning - **Study 1**
- To report on one method of addressing parental misconceptions of toddler water safety- **Study 2**
- To report on work in progress in addressing issues identified - **Study 3**



- **Self-completed questionnaire completed by toddler parents (n=882) whose children were attending early childhood centres (n=327) or swim school lessons (n=555) in summer term of 2004**
- **Differences in toddler water knowledge attitudes and behaviours between groups were compared**
- **SPSS software analysis for data frequency, correlational analysis and non-parametric tests of significance**



## Findings - Study 1

### On the role of swimming ability and lessons:

- **Two thirds (n=599; 68%) believed children were best taught to swim at 3 years or less**
- **29% (n=254) believed toddlers drowned because they had not been taught to swim**
- **52% (n=457) believed that swim lessons were the best way to prevent toddler drowning**
- **32% (n=286) believed it better to develop toddler swimming ability than rely on adult supervision**



### On knowledge of toddler drowning:

- **40% (n=350) believed that neighbourhood creeks were more dangerous than swimming pools (37% were unsure)**
- **24% (n=210) believed that most toddler drowning took place on someone else's property (43% were unsure)**
- **18% (n=157) believed that it was not possible to provide constant supervision around water at home**



## Conclusions - Study 1

- **Many parents have an overly optimistic view of the role of swimming ability and pre-school lessons in drowning prevention**
- **This was especially so for parents with toddlers enrolled in lessons**
- **Swim schools in particular need to counter parental misconceptions of the protective value of swimming and reiterate the importance of close and constant adult supervision of toddlers around water**





## Changing parental misconceptions –

### Study 2

- **Parents (n = 106) of 2-4-year-old toddlers enrolled in swim school lessons**
- **Self-directed questionnaire before and after a 10-week poolside water safety programme.**
- **Differences in pre- and post-programme knowledge and beliefs were chi-square tested to identify significant changes in parental comprehension of toddler water safety after the programme.**



## Findings - Study 2

By the end of the programme:

- **More parents were aware of the family or friend's swimming pool as the primary site of toddler drowning (59% v 78%)**
- **More parents agreed that their toddler required more, not less, adult supervision after swimming lessons (85% v 97%)**
- **More disagreed that swimming lessons were the best way to prevent toddler drowning (65% v 74%)**
- **Parental understanding of child CPR however, did not improve after the programme**



## Conclusions - Study 2

- **Toddler lessons in swim schools provide a valuable opportunity to address parental misconceptions about toddler water safety**
- **Further research is required to determine how parents whose toddlers do not attend swimming lessons might similarly benefit from such a programme**



- **A survey of swim school instructors to ascertain their beliefs about swimming ability, pre-school lesson and toddler water safety**
- **Conducted in conjunction with a toddler water safety training programme for instructors**
- **Collaboration between WAI, Swim coaches and Teachers (SCAT) and Swim New Zealand (SNZ)**



## Active Movement:

- SPARC developed initiative to promote activity for infants, toddlers and young children.
- Active Movement acknowledges that positive early movement experiences impact on the way infants, toddlers and young children learn and grow.

## Active Movement in Water:

- Pregnancy, Bath/Home, pool and swim school resources promote water play activities in a safe environment
- Activities promote fundamental skill development that occurs in children under the age of five years.
- Give added value to swim schools rather than promoting solely 'learn to swim' or 'drown proofing'

## References:

For Further Information

**Moran, K. & Stanley, T. (2006). Parental perceptions of toddler water safety, swimming ability and swimming lessons. *Injury Control and Safety Promotion*, 13(3) pp?**

**Moran, K. & Stanley, T. (2006). Toddler drowning prevention: Teaching parents about water safety in conjunction with their child's in-water lessons. . *Injury Control and Safety Promotion*, 13(4) pp?**

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See big people, nothing to it!!!

