

Safe Living on the Water's Edge – Parental Perceptions of Toddler Water Safety

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Purpose

What?

A study of parental/caregiver background and beliefs of toddler water safety to determine:

Ø what parents think about the role of swimming lessons

Ø what parents think about the role of supervision

Ø what parents think about current toddler water safety practice.



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Methods

Where and when?

17 swim schools and 23 early childhood centres in the Auckland region surveyed in summer 2004

Who?

Ø882 parents/caregivers of toddlers (2 – 4 years)

Ø555 swim school parents

Ø327 early childhood centre parents

How?

ØSelf-answered questionnaire of 22 questions

ØApproximately 15 minutes to complete



Background

Ø94.0% parents, 84.7% female

ØFamily ownership of

recreational craft n = 256 (29.5%)

home pool n = 107 (12.9%)

ØFamily aquatic activity in previous year

beach n = 853 (96.7%)

public pool n = 776 (88.0%)

home pool n = 500 (56.7%)

recreational craft n = 485 (55.0%)

ØLife-threatening experience

self n = 193 (22.0%)

child n = 140 (15.9%)



Parental abilities

ØSwimming ability

weak/non-swimmer n = 333 (37.7%)
(25 metres or less)

ØAbility to perform CPR on children

weak or no understanding
n = 386 (43.8%)



Parental perceptions

Parents were asked what was the:

Ø Best age to learn to swim

- three years or less n = 576 (65.3%)

Ø Age that children can be trusted alone in a home pool

- never n = 613 (69.5%)

Of the 219 who said yes,

between 10 – 15 years n = 159 (72.6%)



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Parental perceptions: swimming lessons

Toddler swimming ability	Agree	Disagree
Toddlers drown because they haven't learned to swim	n = 254 (28.8%)	n = 509 (57.7%)
The earlier children learn to swim, the safer they will be	n = 563 (63.8%)	n = 153 (17.3%)
Swimming lessons are the best way to prevent your toddler from drowning	n = 457 (51.8%)	n = 279 (31.6%)
Toddlers between 2 - 4 years of age are too young to learn to swim	n = 80 (9.1%)	n = 702 (79.6%)
It is better to develop the toddlers swimming ability than rely on adult supervision	n = 286 (32.4%)	n = 488 (55.3%)



Parental perceptions: supervision

Toddler supervision around water	Agree	Disagree
Always be within arm's reach of your toddler around water	n = 762 (86.4%)	n = 62 (7.0%)
At home, it is not possible to constantly supervise toddlers around water	n = 157 (17.8%)	n = 680 (77.1%)
At a surf beach the lifeguards are the best people to supervise toddlers in the water	n = 41 (4.7%)	n = 800 (90.7%)



Parental perceptions: water safety

Toddler water safety	Agree	Disagree
Homeowners should not have to fence their pools if they don't have children	n = 82 (9.3%)	n = 744 (84.4%)
All parents of young children should know how to do CPR in case of an emergency	n = 827 (93.8%)	n = 15 (1.7%)
Most toddlers drowning occurs when toddlers find access to someone else's pool	n = 210 (23.8%)	n = 271 (30.7%)
	Don't know n = 382 (43.3%)	
Neighbourhood creeks and drains are more dangerous than swimming pools for toddlers	n = 350 (39.7%)	n = 182 (20.7%)
	Don't know n = 326 (37.0%)	



Key Findings:

Ø Two thirds agreed that the earlier children learn to swim, the safer they will be

Ø Two thirds believe that the best age to learn to swim is 3 years or less

Ø One half agreed that swimming lessons are the best way to prevent toddler drowning

Ø One third agreed that it is better to develop toddlers swimming ability than rely on adult supervision

Ø One quarter believe that most toddlers drown in someone else's pool



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