

Travel health made simple

5- The dangers of swimming



Drowning

More than 350,000 people drown each year worldwide from swimming.

Drowning is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide.

80% of people who die from drowning are male.

Small children with access to water have the highest risk of drowning.



Before entering the water!

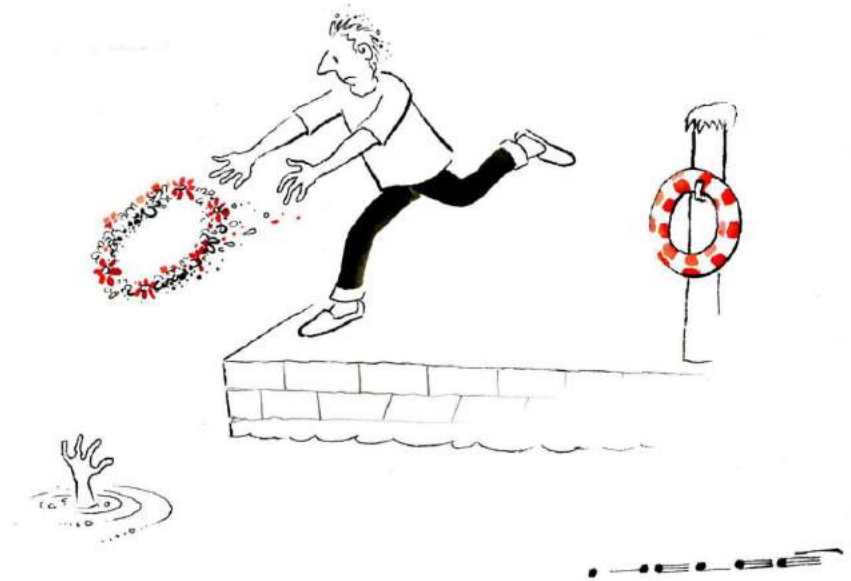
Make sure that you know how to swim!

Also ensure that you:

- are in good health
- are not suffering from an acute health condition (e.g. diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure, an infectious disease) that may put your life in danger or result in serious health consequences

Take your cell phone to the swimming area - it can be very helpful in case of an emergency.

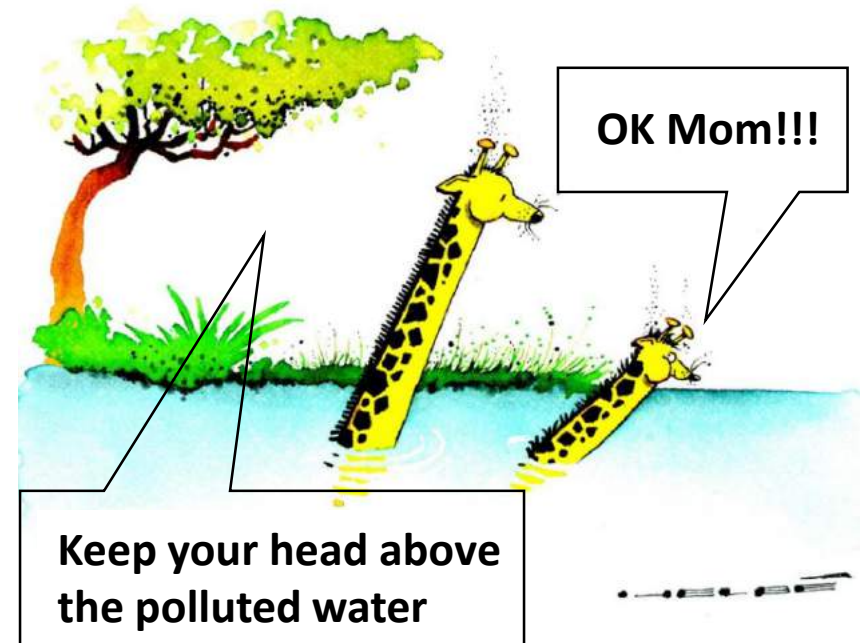
Check the local weather conditions. Avoid swimming in case of a storm.



Before entering the water!

Make sure that you know the swimming area:

- Strong currents and submerged objects can cause injuries and drowning
- Avoid climbing on wet rocks
- Beaches close to cities and river mouths are often heavily polluted with sewage and other wastes.
- If you cannot avoid swimming in a polluted area, keep your head above water to prevent ear infections and avoid swallowing the contaminated water, which is full of bacteria.



On the beach

Avoid walking barefoot along the beach or in shallow water.

Wear shoes or sandals at all times, even when wading, in order to avoid cuts and wounds as well as fungal infections and certain parasites.



Avoid walking barefoot on the beach



Once in the water

Know your physical limits, be honest with yourself about how well you can swim.

- Never swim alone
- Lifeguards are rarely available, particularly in third world countries.
- You swim at your own risk.
- Adopt a buddy system – swim in pairs or in a supervised area
- Do not swim when tired, too hot or cold or too far for safety.
- Avoid mixing alcohol and medication when swimming. Both impair judgement and increase the risk of drowning.

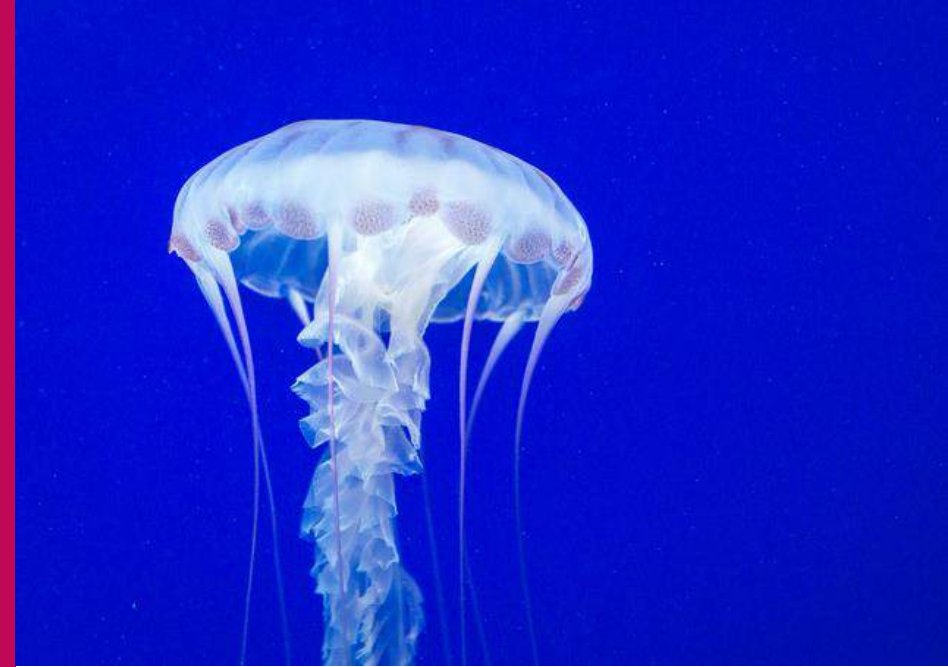


Avoid alcohol when swimming



Once in the water

- Do not eat or chew gum while swimming. Having something in the mouth can result in choking.
- Do not go swimming right after a meal.
- Do not touch strange objects in the water and be careful where you walk or swim.
 - Jellyfish and stingrays as well as poisonous seaweed and other aquatic life (sharks, barracudas, sea snakes, sea urchins, etc.) can be painful and even fatal.
 - Stonefish live in tropical seas. These spiny venomous fish blend in with the sand and are easily stepped on. Their sting is very painful and can result in death.



Do not touch strange objects!



Diving

Always use extreme caution in unfamiliar areas.

Enter the water feet first and check the water depth as well as what lies below the surface.

Each year hundreds of people are paralyzed from irreversible neck and back injuries sustained while diving into the water.



Junior...
Always go in feet first!

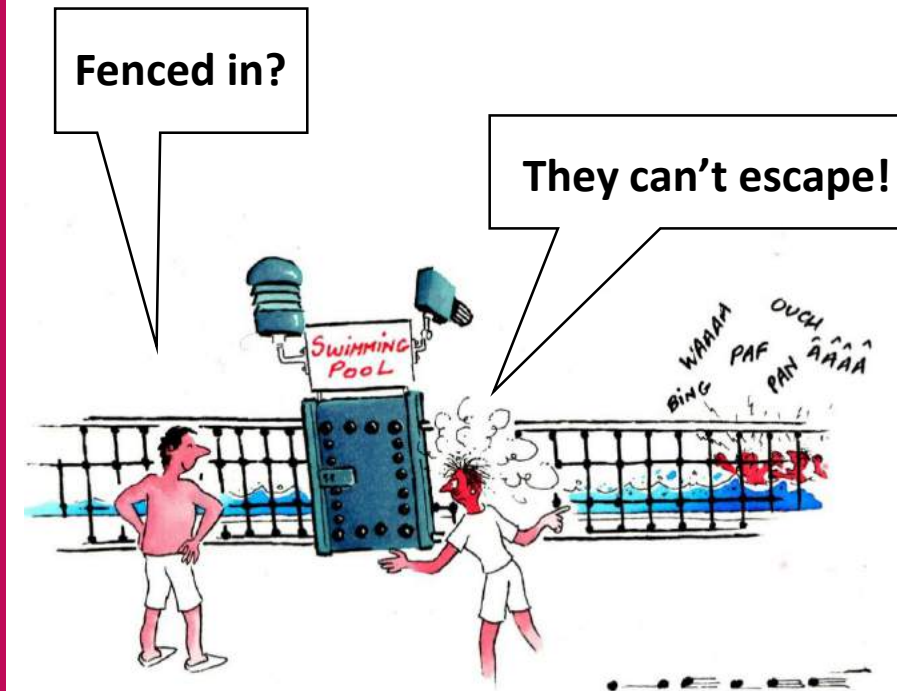
Yes Mom!!!



Water and children

Special precautions must be taken for children around water:

- Constant adult supervision of children playing near or in water is essential.
- Never leave a small child unattended, even for only a few seconds
- A toddler can drown in as little as 3 inches (8 centimeters) of water (e.g. bathtub)
- A child who knows how to swim has less chance of drowning.
 - Flotation aids are not intended to be life saving devices.
 - Ensure that pool areas are fenced and the gate is latched to avoid access to children.



Conclusion

Use common sense and avoid unnecessary risks.

Know your limit.

Learn to swim.

Use a buddy system.

Swimming can be great fun but it is a potentially dangerous activity.



Take your cell phone

