



**American  
Red Cross**

of Lee County

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## **Preparation and safety can make the 4<sup>th</sup> of July a blast** *Follow simple precautions in the heat and around the water*

**FORT MYERS, June 30** – With the Fourth of July just around the corner, there's nothing like swimming to help cool you off this weekend. The American Red Cross offers these safety steps you can take whether you are taking a dip in the pool, or spending the day at the beach:

### **Summer and swimming go hand in hand**

- Swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards.
- Always swim with a buddy; do not allow anyone to swim alone.
- Never leave a young child unattended near water and do not trust a child's life to another child; teach children to always ask permission to go near water.
- Have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets around water, but do not rely on life jackets alone.
- Maintain constant supervision.
- Make sure everyone in your family learns to swim well. Enroll in age-appropriate Red Cross water orientation and learn to swim courses.
- If you have a pool, secure it with appropriate barriers. Many children who drown in home pools were out of sight for less than five minutes and in the care of one or both parents at the time.
- Avoid distractions when supervising children around water.
- If a child is missing, check the water first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- Have appropriate equipment, such as reaching or throwing equipment, a cell phone, life jackets and a first aid kit.
- Know how and when to call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
- Enroll in Red Cross water safety, first aid and CPR courses to learn how to respond to emergencies.

### **Ocean fun calls for special safety tips**

- Learn to swim, especially in the surf.
- Swim only at a lifeguard-protected beach, within the designated swimming area. Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards.
- Never swim alone.
- Be cautious at all times and check local weather conditions.

- Swim sober.
- Make sure to wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket.
- Don't dive headfirst, protect your neck. Check for depth and obstructions before diving. Go in feet first the first time.
- Stay at least 100 feet away from piers and jetties. Permanent rip currents often exist near these structures.
- Pay especially close attention to children and elderly persons when at the beach. Even in shallow water, wave action can cause a loss of footing.
- Keep a lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals may be dangerous. Avoid patches of plants. Leave animals alone.
- Make sure you always have enough energy to swim back to shore.

Rip currents are responsible for many lives lost on our nation's beaches every year, and for most of the rescues performed by lifeguards. For your safety, be aware of the danger of rip currents and remember the following:

- If you are caught in a rip current, swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Once you are free, turn and swim toward shore. If you can't swim to the shore, float or tread water until you are free of the rip current and then head toward shore.

**Ah, the beach - sunglasses, sunscreen, flip flops**

- Protect your skin. Limit the amount of direct sunlight you receive between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and wear sunscreen with a protection factor of at least 15.
- Drink plenty of water regularly, even if you're not thirsty. Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine in them.
- Protect your eyes, wear sunglasses that will absorb at least 90 percent of UV sunlight.
- Wear foot protection. The sand can burn your feet and glass and other sharp objects can cut them.
- Watch for signs of heat stroke – hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; rapid, shallow breathing. If you suspect someone is suffering from heat stroke, call 9-1-1 and move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body by applying cool, wet cloths or towels to the skin (or misting it with water) and fanning the person. Watch for signs of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear. Keep the person lying down.

**Visit [arclcc.org](http://arclcc.org) and [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) for preparedness advice and tips.**

*The Red Cross is dedicated to helping make families and communities safer at home and around the world. It provides training in life-saving skills and mobilizes relief to victims of disasters in addition to assisting members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families. For additional information about the Red Cross and the assistance it provides, making donations, registering for a class or volunteering, call 278-3401, or log on to [arclcc.org](http://arclcc.org). The American Red Cross of Lee County is a proud member of the United Way of Lee County.*