

WVATC TIP SHEET:

WV Autism Training Center

(304) 696-2332

www.marshall.edu/atc

atc@marshall.edu

How to Keep your Child Safe Around Water



Where there's water, I will wait!

Teach your child that **ANY** time they are around water, they must **WAIT** for adult supervision and approval before entering the area.

- Drowning is the **#1 cause of death** for all children ages 0 - 5, and up to age 18 for children with ASD.
- Children with ASD are **160 times** more likely to drown than their neurotypical peers.



Pick the right flotation device

- Look for a **Type 1** or **Type 2** life jacket, and ensure that it is **UL tested**. Types 1 and 2 jackets are designed to roll an unconscious person onto their back while in the water, greatly increasing likelihood of survival.
- "Coast Guard Approved" means only that they are approved for use on a boat.
- Make sure that you use a life jacket that fits your child correctly.



Controlled Water vs. Uncontrolled Water Environments

- Controlled = Swimming pools, lifeguarded swimming areas
- Uncontrolled = Ocean, river, pond, lake, wastewater, unsupervised swimming area, any water that is too deep or murky to see the bottom
- In controlled water environments, expose your child to the feel of **not** having a device on so they become familiar with how their body moves in water.
- **Do not** let your child jump into the pool while wearing their life jacket because they will get used to the artificial buoyancy provided and will not know how to bring themselves to the surface when not wearing one.
- **Always** wear lifejacket to cross the threshold around uncontrolled water environments.



Consistency is Key!

- Children who are not independent swimmers, able to save their own lives, should **NEVER** be in the water unaccompanied by a watching caregiver.
- Identify a waiting area around any controlled water environments you frequent.
- Establish and use a visual signal to indicate that you are ready for your child to enter the water (ex. thumbs up sent by caregiver and returned by child).
- Ensure all caregivers know the rules and visual signal and use them **EVERY TIME** you are around water.



WEST VIRGINIA
AUTISM TRAINING CENTER
AT MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

Information provided by *Water Safety with Miss Dayna*. Scan here for additional strategies.

