

Health Unit
Media Release

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Pools Need Fences! It's the Law!

Swimming pools can be fun for the whole family. They can also be dangerous. Most municipalities in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties have by-laws that require homeowners to install a fence that completely surrounds the pool. The fence will have a proper latching gate. Children are most at risk because they like to play in water and can't see the danger. Proper fencing has been shown to reduce the number of drownings by up to 70%. The Canadian Red Cross looked at drowning in Canada over a 10 year period. They found that only 4% of homes where a toddler drowned had the right kind of fence (SafeKids Canada 2005).

Every municipality should have their own by-law. The by-law explains what a 'pool' is and how high the fence needs to be. Safe Kids Canada has developed pool safety and fencing rules that can be used where no by-law exists. They recommend that backyard swimming pools should have a fence completely around it. The fence needs to be at least 4 feet tall. It should have a self-closing, self-latching gate.

If you have or plan to install:

- An inflatable pool
- A garden pond (yes, some garden ponds come under the by-laws)
- An above ground pool, or
- An inground pool

call your local municipal office to find out what the by-laws are in your area. There is only one way to make sure no one falls into your pool when no one is there to watch. Have a proper fence and gate.

Here are some more tips to keep you and your family safe in the water this summer:

- Learn to swim and never swim alone.
- Never swim under the influence of alcohol or other drugs that may cause impairment.
- Teach children about basic water safety rules.
- Keep children within arms reach.
- Learn CPR and First Aid.
- Make sure lifesaving equipment and a first aid kit are handy.
- Keep a phone close by to call 911 if necessary.
- Keep the deck area clear to prevent tripping and falling.

- Store pool chemicals safely out of reach of children.

As Chanelle Bernicky, Grade 3, Westminister Public School says, “Don’t be dense! Get a fence!”

To learn more about water safety, contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853.