



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Alberta Blue Cross® and the Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories share drowning prevention tips

Drowning is a silent and swift threat, claiming the lives of 450 Canadians each year according to the [2020 National Drowning Report](#)—deaths that are often preventable with simple, proactive steps. During 2024 National Drowning Prevention Week, Alberta Blue Cross and the Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories are encouraging Albertans to take action to protect themselves by understanding the risks and practicing water safety.

“As an organization that is committed to promoting wellness, Alberta Blue Cross has an ongoing focus on injury prevention—and as we are well into summer, we are keenly aware of the danger of drowning and the importance of promoting water safety,” says Brian Geislinger, senior vice-president of Corporate Relations and Community Engagement with Alberta Blue Cross.

National Drowning Prevention Week is the third full week of July every year, coinciding with Canada’s peak drowning period. This week promotes awareness of the need for individuals, communities, organizations and governments to take action in an effort to save lives.

This year, National Drowning Prevention Week takes place from July 21 to July 27 with a focus on a different theme each day.

“We encourage you to discuss these important topics with your loved ones throughout the week, and to integrate at least one of these safety measures this summer,” says Madison Lalonde, director of Communications and Public Education with the Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories. “Make prevention key. It could save a life.”

National Drowning Prevention Week drowning prevention and awareness tips

- **July 21—fatal drowning:** according to the [World Health Organization](#), drowning ranked as the third leading cause of unintentional death worldwide, but what does drowning really look like? Unlike the movies, where the victim splashes and flails wildly, drowning is often silent and can occur within seconds.
- **July 22—non-fatal drowning:** non-fatal drownings refer to cases where the victim survives but requires treatment due to injury, loss of consciousness, swallowing water or having difficulty breathing. As stated in a recent [20-year drowning analysis by the](#)



[Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories and the Injury Prevention Centre](#), in Alberta for every fatal drowning, there are 6 non-fatal drownings.

- **July 23—backyard pool and open water safety:** private pools and open waters both come with hazards of their own—especially for young children.

As private backyard pools typically do not have lifeguards on duty like public pools, it is important to control and restrict access to the water through multiple layers of protection, such as fencing, self-closing gates and active supervision.

As stated in the [2020 National Drowning Report](#), on average 70 per cent of fatal drownings in Canada occur in open water, such as lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and ditches. Check local weather conditions and make sure you know your own limits before going in.

- **July 24—learn to swim/Swim to Survive®:** most drownings occur close to safety, and often the victims had no intention of going into the water in the first place. Could you survive a sudden fall into deep water? Swim to Survive® is a Lifesaving Society program that focuses on developing the skills to survive a sudden fall into deep water through the following 3 simple techniques:
 1. Roll into deep water—this skill teaches you how to recover and reorient yourself should you take a sudden fall into deep water.
 2. Tread water for 1 minute—this skill trains you to support yourself above the water while you catch your breath and get your bearings.
 3. Swim 50 metres—this skill helps you build up the endurance needed to swim back to safety.
- **July 25—supervise children:** the [2024 Alberta Drowning Report](#) states that from [2015 to 2019](#), 100 per cent of fatal incidents involving children under 5 years of age occurred because of a lack of or distracted supervision.

The Lifesaving Society encourages parents and caregivers to practice active supervision when in, on and around the water. Active supervision requires parents to be within sight, earshot and arm's reach of a child at all times. Parents are the first and best supervisor of children—if you are not within arm's reach, you've gone too far.

- **July 26—boating safety and PFD (Personal Flotation Device) wear:** choose it. Use it. Lifejackets are like seatbelts: they only work if you're wearing them. By the time you need a lifejacket, it is often too late to put one on.

When choosing a lifejacket, look for one that is brightly coloured so that boaters and other swimmers can see you. Make sure that it is Transport Canada approved and that it fits you properly—read the label to check the weight range and chest size.

Lifejackets should be worn by everyone while boating, during aquatic activities such as paddle boarding and in hazardous aquatic environments such as on ice or around rivers. Weak swimmers or non-swimmers should always wear a lifejacket when in, on or around the water. Better safe than sorry!

- **July 27—alcohol and substance use:** alcohol consumption is a major risk factor in many boating and swimming fatalities. Both alcohol and cannabis can impair balance, judgement and reflexes with their effects heightened by environmental factors such as sun exposure, wind, waves and dehydration, making it more difficult to get out of trouble. Stay sober in, on and around the water.

For more information about National Drowning Prevention Week, please visit <https://www.lifesaving.org/>.

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About the Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society, Alberta and Northwest Territories Branch is a non-profit charity, with a mission to prevent drowning and water-related injury. This mission is accomplished through our training programs, WaterSmart® public education, aquatic safety management services, lifesaving sport programs, and water incident research.

About Alberta Blue Cross

As the largest provider of health benefits in Alberta, we believe we have the potential and responsibility to impact people's lives for the better. We believe all communities should thrive, and we are committed to serving as a champion for wellness by promoting the health of Albertans.



For more information, please contact Sharmin Hislop, director of Corporate Communications, Alberta Blue Cross at shislop@ab.bluecross.ca or 780-231-6356 or Madison Lalonde, director of Communications and Public Education, Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories at Experts@Lifesaving.org or 780-415-1755.



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