



# Portable pools pose drowning risk for tots

By [Liz Szabo](#), USA TODAY

Portable pools pose a greater safety threat to small children than many parents realize, a new study suggests.



Nationwide Children's Hospital

There is deep danger in shallow water: Kids can drown in as little as 2 inches.

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About two dozen children each year drown in portable pools, according to a study published today in *Pediatrics*. Nearly all are under age 5.

Unlike permanent pools, portable pools aren't typically required to meet any local safety standards, says study author [Gary Smith](#), director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

Smith notes that portable pools are increasingly popular and come in all sizes. Hard-plastic wading pools, which hold about 18 inches of water, may cost only a few dollars at a local drugstore. Family-size, inflatable pools, nearly as large as a small, in-ground pool, can cost closer to \$1,000, he says.

These pools pose unique risks, says Meri-K Appy, president of Safe Kids USA, an advocacy group. Few people, for example, are willing to invest in building a safety fence around a portable pool — one of the best ways to prevent drownings — because a fence could cost more than the pool itself.

"These pools are too small for people to invest in an isolation fence but too large to drain every time," Appy says.

About 11% of all pool drowning deaths in kids under 5 take place in portable pools, the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) says.

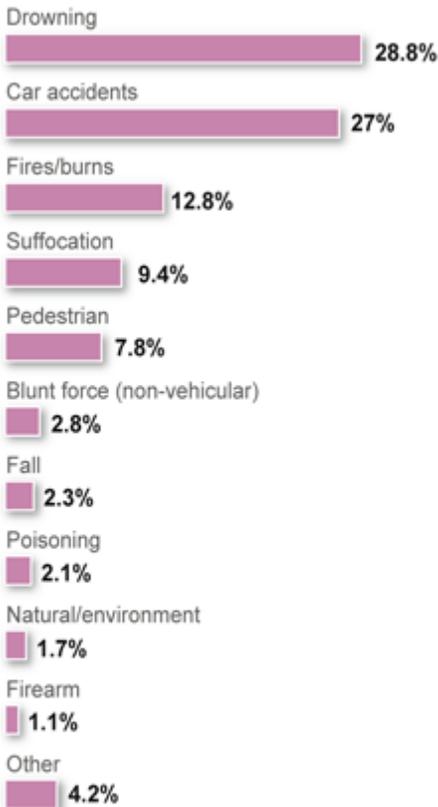
Children drowned in as little as 2 inches of water, according to the study, based on data from a total of 209 deaths from 2001 to 2009.

About 43% of the children were being supervised when they went under water; 39% were unsupervised; and 18% of kids died during a "lapse" in supervision.

"Parents don't always understand that it just takes a couple of minutes for children to be submerged under water for their breathing and heart to stop," Smith says. "What's different about drowning is that it's quick, it's silent and it's final."

## Deadliest accidents

Deaths by unintentional injury, ages 1 to 4:



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007 (based on 1,588 total deaths)

By Janet Loehrke, USA TODAY

When supervising kids in the water, Appy says, caregivers need to give children their full attention and be only an arm's length away. Children have died at swimming parties, surrounded by others, because adults weren't within reach.

Drowning is the leading cause of death from unintentional injuries in children ages 1 to 4, causing 29% of these deaths — more even than traffic accidents, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They include not only pools and lakes but bathtubs. Parents also should learn [CPR](#), or cardiopulmonary resuscitation, says Susan Baker, professor with the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy. The study notes that few parents even attempted CPR, perhaps because they doubted their skills.

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