

Keep Your Eyes On Thawing Ponds, Rivers and Lakes

Spring has sprung and now more than ever, parents and caregivers are reminded to keep their eyes on thawing ponds, rivers and lakes. Increased vigilance and supervision by parents and caregivers, as well as educating children to stay away from thawing ponds, rivers and lakes can go a long way in preventing drownings in our community.

Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death among Ontario children under five years old, according to data released by the **Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)** in July 2005. Children under the age of five are involved in more drowning or near-drowning incidents than those in any other age group, at a rate of 5.24 per 100,000 population, more than four times the rate for those over the age of 19. The second most at-risk age group is that of children aged 5 to 9 years old, with a rate of 4.12 per 100,000 population.

Unattended toddlers are a high risk because they move quickly, are curious and need close and constant supervision by an adult. Children under 5 years of age are the least capable of self-rescue of any age group. Patterns of drowning in young children show that they most often drown in backyard swimming pools, bathtubs, rivers and lakes, hot tubs, ditches, ponds, sewage lagoons and canals. Two thirds of these drownings happen to those who never intended to get wet in the first place.

With these frightening statistics in mind, it's important to remember that drownings are preventable. As rivers, lakes and ponds thaw, parents and caregivers are reminded to stay **within arms reach** of children when in the water or close to water. Educating children as to the dangers associated with spring thaw and teaching them safety precautions are important measures to take at this time of year.

The Ottawa Drowning Prevention Coalition, made up of representatives from the Canadian Red Cross, CHEO's injury prevention centre Plan-it Safe, the City of Ottawa's Fire Services, Public Health and Parks and Recreation Departments and the Lifesaving Society, is committed to continue raising awareness of water safety and drowning prevention for parents/caregivers and children/youth in the Ottawa area.

Let's make sure our community prevents drownings this year !

