



Florida Health Mission:

To protect, promote
& improve the health
of all people
in Florida through
integrated state, county,
& community efforts.

Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
Surgeon General & Secretary

**Florida Department of Health
Lee County**

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Water safety requires awareness

Fort Myers, FL—The Florida Department of Health in Lee County is urging people spending time around the water to stay safe from natural dangers including drowning, and bacterial and amebic infections with the following steps:

- Never swim alone
- Adults should actively watch children while in or near water
- Wear a life jacket when boating and when swimming with limited skills
- Learn to swim
- Learn water rescue skills and CPR
- Don't swim in open saltwater or brackish water with an open wound to avoid bacterial infections
- Swim and enjoy water sports in warm fresh water with a nose clip to avoid amebic entry
- Avoid digging in or stirring up the sediment while taking part in water related activities in shallow, warm freshwater

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children under 5 years old, and second leading cause of death for children 14 and under. Residential swimming pools are the site of most pre-school drownings caused by lack of adequate supervision.

Bacterial infections caused by *Vibrio Vulnificus* are rare, estimated to affect only 1 percent of the population, but deadly to half of those affected. Individuals with pre-existing medical conditions are estimated to be 80 times more likely to develop bloodstream infections than healthy people. Contrary to some news reports, this bacterial infection to the skin does not cause necrotizing fasciitis (flesh eating).

Amebic infections caused by *Naegleria fowleri* are even rarer, estimated to affect only 30 people between 2004 and 2013 from exposure to recreational water. This ameba causes death in nearly all patients.

Swim lessons are available through city and county parks and recreation departments and the YMCA in Lee County. CPR certifications can be earned through the American Red Cross or American Heart Association.

For more information go to www.floridahealth.gov.

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