

Stay Safe Near the Water:

Life Jacket Tips for Families

As warmer weather returns and we spend more time near rivers, lakes, and the coast, it's important to take steps to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe by encouraging safe water recreation for all ages.

Why Life Jackets Matter

Drowning can happen silently and in as little as 30 seconds. Even strong swimmers, including teens and adults, are safer when they wear a life jacket, especially when boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, or playing near open water. Life jackets are a powerful way to protect our community while honoring the sacred gift of water.

What to Look for in a Life Jacket

When choosing a life jacket, be sure it has:

- A U.S. Coast Guard approval label
- A snug fit (raise your arms—if the jacket hits your chin, it may be too loose)
- Head support and a crotch strap for young children
- A design appropriate for your planned activity
- Bright colors, which help others see you in the water

Comfort and style matter too, especially for teens. The more comfortable it is, the more likely they are to wear it.

Using Your Life Jacket

- Check it each spring for wear and tear. Discard it if you see mildew, rust, or broken straps.
- Never rely on inflatable toys like water wings or rings for safety.
- Practice using your life jacket in the water so you know how it works.

Where Life Jackets Should Be Worn

- While boating, paddle boarding, rafting, or jet skiing
- While swimming in lakes, rivers, or the ocean
- While playing near docks or the water's edge (especially for young children)

Let's continue to protect one another and our future generations by making water safety a priority. Life jackets float—you don't.

For more water safety tips, visit: seattlechildrens.org/dp or indpc.org.