

# **OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center provides tips on staying safe on the water - no matter your age**

August 2 2017 2:02 PM



ALTON - For many, summer fun means some time on the water. Whether that means cooling off in open water or a pool, splashing around can turn serious quickly.

Last year in Illinois, 21 children drowned. These tragedies are wholly preventable, and children should always be supervised around water.

“Parents and other care givers need to be especially vigilant when young children are near the water. Nobody wants to have to say, ‘I just looked away for a second.’” said Dr. Rodger Hanko, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony’s Health Center Emergency Physician.

He continued, “Not counting boating accidents, the National Safety Council estimates that nine people die from drowning every day in the United States. While drowning is more common in children less than five years of age, it still represents the second most common cause of death in people aged 5-24.”

However, water dangers are very real no matter your age. According to Dr. Hanko, in addition to pools and spas, toilets, bathtubs, and even buckets can pose a risk of drowning to infants and toddlers. Older swimmers, meanwhile, need to recognize limitations, strength and endurance.

“Lakes and rivers pose hazards that pools do not. Strong currents and undertows can catch people off guard, and diving into unknown waters can result in death or permanent disability,” said Dr. Hanko.

The following are some water safety tips from the National Safety Council:

- Don't go in the water unless you know how to swim; swim lessons are available for all ages
- Learn CPR and rescue techniques
- Make sure the body of water matches your skill level; swimming in a pool is much different than swimming in a lake or river, where more strength is needed to handle currents
- If you do get caught in a current, don't try to fight it; stay calm and float with it, or swim parallel to the shore until you can swim free
- Swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard
- Don't push or jump on others
- Never drink alcohol when swimming; alcohol is involved in about half of all male teen drownings, according to [KidsHealth.org](http://KidsHealth.org)