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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Beach safety tips for parents**

Did you know that a child can drown in as little as one inch of water? Children ages 5 to 14 most often drown at open-water sites (rivers, lakes and oceans). In fact, 29 percent of drownings that involve children ages 5 to 14 occur in open bodies of water. With thousands of pools and miles of beaches, Florida leads the U.S. with by far the highest unintentional drowning death rate in the nation for the one to four year-old age group, and is third in the nation for overall drowning death rates between 1999 and 2003

### **Lifeguards are not enough!**

One in five parents believes that when lifeguards are present, the lifeguard is the main person responsible for supervising children in the water. However, the typical lifeguard-to-swimmer ratio at public swimming areas may be as high as 25 swimmers per lifeguard. Active supervision is the best way to keep your kids safe.

### **What You Can Do:**

Don't let a beach day turn into a bad day – follow these tips around open water.

- Actively supervise children in and around open bodies of water, giving them undivided attention.
- Appoint a designated “water watcher,” taking turns with other adults.
- Keep a phone nearby in case of an emergency.
- Make sure kids swim only in areas designated for swimming.
- Enroll your child in swimming lessons after age four – typically the earliest age when they're likely to practice and retain information. Teach children how to tread water, float and stay by the shore.
- Teach children not to dive into oceans, lakes or rivers because you never know how deep the water is or what might be hidden under the surface of the water.
- Teach children that swimming in open water is not the same as swimming in a pool. They need to be aware of uneven surfaces, river currents, ocean undertow and changing weather.
- Do not let kids operate personal water crafts such as jet skis. These machines are intended for adults and require special training.
- Learn infant and child CPR.

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*The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.*  
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