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Four-Sided Fencing Around Home Pools Saves Kids' Lives

A new survey from Safe Kids Canada reveals that Canadian parents believe if their child has taken swimming lessons, fences and gates around home pools are not needed. But swimming lessons alone are not enough. Research shows that a pool with four-sided fencing which block kids from getting to the pool from the house can save lives. A fence that goes around all four sides of the pool can prevent up to seven out of 10 drownings in children under the age of five.

Between 1994 and 2003, nearly half of all drownings and near-drownings for children under the age of 14 occurred in home swimming pools. Keeping kids safe around pools should be a top priority for parents and caregivers this summer.

“In Canada, most municipalities require home pools to be closed off by a three-sided fence, but this is not enough,” says Allyson Hewitt, executive director of Safe Kids Canada, the national injury prevention program of The Hospital for Sick Children. “Children should not be able to get to the pool directly from the house.”

Current by-laws in Canada state that all home pools must be fenced. Often, homeowners put up three sides of fencing and use their house as the fourth side. While this protects people outside the home from getting into the pool, children inside the home are not properly protected. To protect children, homeowners need a four-sided fence that goes all around the pool and has a self-closing, self-latching gate.

Safe Kids Canada is urging Canadians to help enact municipal by-laws requiring a 1.2 m (4 ft.) high four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around all home swimming pools. Not only should in-ground and above-ground pools be fenced, even inflatable pools should have four-sided fencing. Pool fences and gates should be designed to stop kids from climbing and the latch should be installed out of a young child's reach.

Parents who want to find out about their local by-law and advocate for change to the laws in their area, can start by contacting their local councillor. Advice on how to change by-laws is available on the Safe Kids Canada Web site: www.safekidscanada.ca or by calling 1-888-SAFE-TIPS (723-3847).

Advocating for pool fencing is part of the 2007 Safe Kids Week campaign – *Splash into Safety* – running from May 28 – June 3 and sponsored by Johnson & Johnson. To learn more about drowning prevention, call Safe Kids Canada at 1-888-SAFE-TIPS or visit www.safekidscanada.ca.

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