

Media Release



The Sydney children's
Hospitals Network



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14 January 2015

Experts warn: supervision key to near drowning prevention this summer

Following eight near drowning admissions over the festive season, with three occurring just last week, experts at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and The Children's Hospital at Westmead are urging parents and carers to be vigilant with supervision around the pool and beach, particularly during this summer school holiday period.

Last week across the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, two children presented on two consecutive days at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick after near drowning incidences – one in a pool setting, the other at the beach. There was a third near drowning case admitted later that week to The Children's Hospital at Westmead which was pool-related.

"Drowning is the number one cause of death in children under five years of age. It is usually silent and rapid," said Sandy Thompson, Trauma Clinical Nurse Specialist at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

"Within two minutes of submersion a child will lose consciousness. Irreversible brain damage will occur after approximately three minutes. Sadly, these children can sustain devastating brain injuries and suffer lifelong disabilities,"

According to research by The Children's Hospital at Westmead, 10% of drowning and immersion admissions between 2009 and 2013 were fatal and 16% resulted in some form of neurological deficit.

"We cannot afford to be complacent. Whether it be a bath tub, the beach or a backyard inground or inflatable pool, nothing replaces vigilant adult supervision as the singularly most important factor in drowning prevention," warned Sandy.

In addition to vital supervision, it is important for domestic pool owners to make sure they have adequate fencing, and that pool gates function correctly and are not left open.

Outdoor activity and sport are essential for growth, development and health and The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network supports this while encouraging families to take all necessary precautions to prevent injury from occurring.

- ENDS -

Sandy Thompson is available for interview on the issue and on the importance of prevention.

All individual requests for patient condition updates must first go through the Public Relations departments at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick or The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

For more information, please contact:

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