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Public Service Announcement

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Grand Valley Pediatrics Urges Families to Remain Vigilant During Memorial Day Weekend to Avoid Drowning Accidents

Mesa County, CO - Community Hospital's Grand Valley Pediatrics is urging parents to remain vigilant during the upcoming Memorial Day weekend to help keep children safe and avoid drowning accidents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of accidental death in children age 1-4. For children between the ages of 1-14, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury or death following motor vehicle crashes.

"Drowning accidents can happen very quickly, sometimes within seconds," said Joanna Clem, MD, board certified pediatrician at Community Hospital's Grand Valley Pediatrics. "Drowning is often a quiet accident. There are typically no big splashes or thrashing that people see on TV. We want to urge parents and family members to be extremely vigilant around water this upcoming holiday weekend and throughout the summer when children are more likely to wonder off and explore," added Dr. Clem.

What you can do to help prevent drowning accidents:

- Stay within arm's reach of children when in the water. Avoid use of puddle jumpers and arm floatation devices which can actually increase the risk of a child drowning. These devices put children in the drowning position in the water. These devices give children the false sense that they can float in the water on their own.
- Invest in high-quality swim lessons, which include lessons that teach children how to swim in weeks not months or years. As a parent, take swim lessons if you do not know how to swim.
- Ensure proper fencing around backyard pools (at least 4 feet high surrounded on all sides). Fence should be non-climbable and have a self-latching gate. This includes above ground pools. Studies have shown children between 3 and 5 years old can climb into a pool with a 4-foot wall - even if the ladder is removed.
- Empty kiddie pools or inflatable pools after EVERY use unless they are fenced off. Even shallow pools are a drowning risk to small children.
- Assign a designated water watcher rotating in 10-15 minute increments. The water watcher should not be distracted on a cell phone and should avoid all other activities.
- Hire a lifeguard if you have a gathering at your house and there is a pool or pond on the property.
- Always use life jackets for all at lake or river activities.
- Be prepared to help and learn CPR.

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