PRESENTING PROGRAM TO PEDIATRIANS

Watersmartbabies.com

Maricopa County Arizona has had 137 water related incidents with 41 deaths, including 15 children, two teens and 24 adults since January 1 through August 31, 2011 (insert your area’s statistics). In comparison, Broward County Florida has had 2 child drownings since the beginning of 2011, an 87% reduction from previous years. How did they do it?

In 2009 the Broward County Drowning Prevention Task Force developed the Water SMART Babies program, initiating one of the most effective drowning prevention programs in the country. The curriculum was launched in Feb of 2010 with the backing of the Florida chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Florida baby well visits now include water safety education. On the child’s ninth and twelve month visits, the pediatrician writes out a "Doctor's prescription" for water safety lessons. The parents are also given the Water SMART Babies handbook which includes information on touch supervision, water safety lesson facilities, CPR classes, and tips on home water safety, such as pool fencing, pool covers, door and pool alarms. Handbook information will vary state to state based on local information. As the child visits the pediatrician in subsequent months the doctor can follow up to make sure the family is getting their home equipped with the layers of protection and the child is participating in water safety lessons.

Proof that this program is working, not only comes from the data out of Broward County, but also from a 2009 research project. In 2009 Ruth Brenner and her colleagues conducted a research project at the National Institute of Health to investigate the connection between swimming lessons and drowning. They discovered that participation in formal swimming lessons provided and 88% reduction in risk of drowning in children ages 1-4 years. The authors concluded that “swimming lessons do not increase drowning risk in this group (1-4) and likely have a protective effect” They reported that swim lesson “should be considered for inclusion as part of a complete prevention program”.

Additional data comes from research at the German Sports College in Cologne. These studies demonstrate that swim lessons for babies and toddlers don’t just save lives but they can accelerate their development physically, intellectually and emotionally. As compared with a control group which did not take year-round lessons, the children who swam consistently from infancy were significantly stronger and more coordinated. The children also scored higher for intelligence and problem-solving, which carried over into excellence in academic achievement. Emotionally, they were found to be more self-disciplined with greater self-control and an increased desire to succeed. They rated higher in self-esteem and were more independent and comfortable in social situations than the control groups. These are just a few reasons for instituting Water Smart Babies in your area.