



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 19, 2026

Water Safety Starts Long Before You Reach the Shore

YMCA of Niagara marks National Drowning Prevention Week by encouraging families to build confidence, skills and safe habits around water.

NIAGARA REGION, ON — Living in Niagara means living alongside water.

From Lake Erie and Lake Ontario to neighbourhood pools, splash pads, rivers and the Welland Canal, water is part of everyday life throughout our region. While these spaces provide countless opportunities for recreation, connection and fun, they also serve as an important reminder that water safety is a lifelong skill.

As National Drowning Prevention Week begins on July 19, YMCA of Niagara is encouraging families to take simple steps that help make every water experience a safer one.

According to the [Lifesaving Society](#), nearly seven in ten drowning deaths in Ontario occur between May and September. Lakes and ponds account for the largest share of drownings, while incidents in lifeguard-supervised settings remain exceptionally rare.

“Living in Niagara means water is part of our everyday lives,” said Ben McDermott, General Manager of Health, Fitness and Aquatics at the YMCA of Niagara. “Whether you’re heading to the beach, spending time on a boat or bringing your family to the pool, making safe choices around the water can make all the difference. Knowing your swimming ability, actively supervising children, wearing a lifejacket when boating and choosing lifeguard-supervised swimming areas are simple steps that help everyone enjoy the water more safely.”

Building Confidence for Life

At YMCA of Niagara, water safety begins long before someone becomes a strong swimmer.

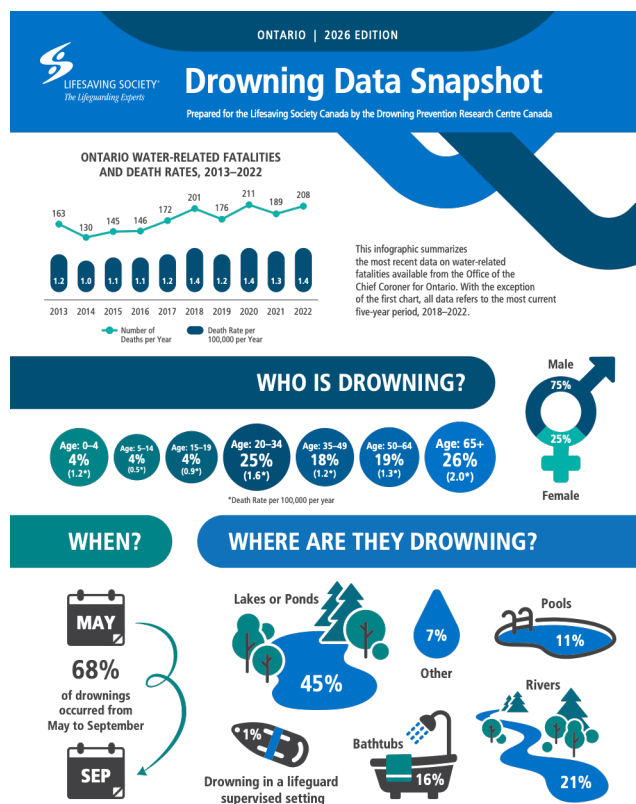
Aquatics programs help children develop confidence and comfort in the water while introducing skills that grow throughout life. For many participants, that journey continues through leadership programs such as Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross and [National Lifeguard certification](#).

Along the way, young people gain more than technical skills. They develop confidence, leadership and responsibility while preparing for meaningful employment serving their communities.

Many YMCA lifeguards began their own journey in swim lessons at the YMCA before returning years later to teach, mentor and help keep local families safe.

Water Safety Graphics At a Glance

Two resources that illustrate why water safety matters and how aspiring lifeguards can begin their journey.



Left: YMCA of Niagara's updated certification pathway illustrates how participants can progress from swim lessons to National Lifeguard certification. Right: The Lifesaving Society's 2026 Ontario Drowning Data Snapshot highlights current provincial trends and reinforces the importance of water safety education, active supervision and choosing lifeguard-supervised swimming environments.

National Drowning Prevention Week at the YMCA

Throughout National Drowning Prevention Week, YMCA of Niagara locations in [Port Colborne](#), [Niagara Centre](#) and [Niagara West](#), will be incorporating water safety messaging and activities designed to reinforce safe habits for children and families.

Whether through swim lessons, leadership programs, family activities or simple conversations about staying safe around water, the goal is the same: helping people of all ages build confidence and make informed decisions whenever they are near the water.

Simple Steps That Save Lives

Before heading to the beach, pool or waterfront this summer, YMCA of Niagara encourages families to remember a few simple safety tips:

- Always actively supervise children in and around water.
- Choose lifeguard-supervised swimming areas whenever possible.
- Wear a properly fitted lifejacket when boating or participating in water activities.
- Swim with a buddy.
- Continue building water confidence through swim lessons and regular practice.

Water safety doesn't begin at the shoreline; it begins with confidence, knowledge and preparation. [Learn More](#)

- [Explore YMCA Aquatics Programs](#)
- [Learn More About Swim Lessons](#)
- [Discover the Journey to Becoming a Lifeguard](#)
- [View Aquatics Schedules](#)

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About the YMCA of Niagara

The YMCA of Niagara is a charity that ignites the potential in people, helping them grow, lead, and give back to their communities. We believe everyone has the innate potential to thrive and are dedicated to empowering individuals to tap into their full abilities. Through diverse programs and services, we foster connection, cultivate belonging, and support well-being to elevate the potential of every person and build a stronger, more connected Niagara Region. To learn more, visit www.ymcaofniagara.org

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