



BOATING WITH KIDS ON BOARD



Kids love going boating, and family boating trips are great fun, but this can all turn to disaster if not enough care is taken and a child's life or wellbeing is put in danger.

So, to help avoid this scenario and to ensure that your family enjoys many hours of boating fun, the BIA has put together the following guidelines and ideas for boating with kids.

- **MAKE SURE THAT YOUR BOAT IS THE RIGHT CAPACITY TO SAFELY CARRY THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS ON BOARD** – when considering this estimate the total weight of all passengers and don't forget to add on the weight of other gear inclusive of iceboxes and personal bags on board.
- **CHECK YOUR SAFETY EQUIPMENT** – make sure there is a PFD available for each person and that equipment such as offshore EPIRBs and communication equipment is current and/or working. *It is also a good idea to take a thermal blanket that you can wrap children in should they need it.*
- **DON'T FORGET THE WATER!** – make sure that you carry plenty of fresh water for each person on board – for a full day on water allow around 5 litres of fluid per person and include no less than 2 litres of water /person. The hotter the temperature the more water you should carry.
- **PUT ON SAFETY FLOATION BEFORE YOUR CHILD GETS INTO THE BOAT** – children can so quickly get into danger, even when launching your boat, so make a practice of putting on floatation safety gear before your child gets into the boat.
- **DON'T RELY ON SAFETY VESTS – KEEP A WATCH:** personal floatation devices (PFD's) and floatation assisted clothing can assist with keeping your child afloat if they should accidentally fall overboard – but, children can drown very quickly so it is important that you:
 - *Know where your child is at all times on a boat* – designate 'watchers' – the bigger the boat the harder to keep watch so maybe take it in turns so that children are constantly supervised by alert carers.
 - *Ensure that your child is wearing a good quality, correctly fitted PFD* (this investment in your child's life can be purchased for about the cost of a carton of beer)
 - *Maybe consider a harness and safety line* that restricts young children from reaching the sides of the boat.
- **WATCH THE TEMPERATURE:** children do not have the same capacity as adults to regulate their body temperature and so are more susceptible to heat stress and chill. You may feel warm but children may be feeling quite cold especially if windy or they have been in the water. Conversely, when you feel cool and comfortable, children can be feeling quite heat distressed especially if they are not covered by sun protective clothing and a broad brimmed hat.
- **THE CHILL FACTOR:** Over water the chill factor is significantly higher than on land so make sure that you keep your child warm by keeping a shirt, jumper, or sun-protective suit on them at all times. Children's body temperature drops very quickly when swimming even in warmer waters so keep a watch on them for signs of getting cold and get them out of the water, dried off and warmed up as quickly as possible.

- **SUN - THE SILENT DANGER:** Children can suffer from dehydration very quickly and they are susceptible to sunburn so make sure that:
 - you take plenty of drinking water and that they are offered drinks regularly,
 - they wear sun protective clothing including a shady hat (don't forget their feet – these tend to burn quickly when boating so a pair of non-slip covered in shoes is a good idea)
 - sun-block is applied regularly – one with insect repellent is useful particularly in inland situations.
- **DON'T FORGET THE INSECT REPELLANT:** Inland and coastal waters are host to a range of biting insects so for everyone's comfort apply insect repellent especially at sunrise and sunset when insects are busy.
- **OTHER THINGS TO WATCH FOR:**
 - *Seasickness* – this afflicts a number of people and early signs that a child may be suffering from seasickness is listlessness, yawning and a pale, maybe clammy skin. If you can catch this early you may be able to avoid the inevitable.... Here are some tips:
 - Get the child to focus on the horizon and not look down on the water
 - Keep them in an area on the boat where they have 'the wind in their face'
 - Encourage small regular amounts of water
 - If travelling in rough seas keep the child towards the rear of the boat where there is less up and down movement of the vessel.
 - If anchored in choppy water locate a spot where the roll of the boat is least – try to encourage them to remain sitting and get them focused on other things such as wildlife and so on – but not looking down at the water for extended periods.
 - *Children love watching the wake at the back of the boat* – and that often entails leaning on the rails near the engine/s – and in some boats exhaust fumes are drawn back to the rear of the boat and children can suddenly feel quite sick from the effects of inhaling these fumes – so keep a watch and don't allow them to stay near engine exhausts for extended periods and if they appear affected, take the child towards the front of the boat in fresh air.

We wish you very many happy days out on water with your family, it's a great family lifestyle!!!