

# Parents ignoring pool gate safety putting toddlers at risk

## National Check Your Pool Gate Month

Under-fives are the most at risk for backyard drownings, yet 30% of parents admit to only checking the safety of their pool area, fence and gate once a year or less. This is despite 33% saying a family member had a near drowning experience involving a backyard pool.\*

There were several excuses parents had for not making a safety check, the number one response being 'they had no excuse' (40%). This was followed by not knowing what aspect of safety to check (19%), forgetting to check (18%) and not enough time (10%).

Child water safety advocate Laurie Lawrence said he was shocked by the lack of diligence and urged all pool owners to check the safety of their pool gates during 'National Check-Your-Pool-Gate Month' this December, as faulty pool gates and fences remain a leading cause of drownings in Aussie kids under five\*\*.

12 Aussie children under the age of five lost their lives because of swimming pool drownings in 2018/19 and over the past 12 years, this age group had the highest incidence (42%) of non-fatal drownings throughout Australia.\*\*\*

"We know that kids who drown most commonly gain access to the pool area through a faulty fence or gate and this is something that should not be happening. Pool owners need to check their fences, gates, latches and hinges regularly, as a gate that is not self-closing and self-latching provides instant and often undetected access for toddlers to the pool area," Laurie said.

"We want to see a reduction in drownings this Summer and it starts at home with safe backyards."

John Clark, Technical Director of Australian company D&D Technologies, the manufacturer of the MagnaLatch® Pool Safety Gate Latch, said the company was a long-time partner of Laurie Lawrence's KidsAlive™ water safety program, and launched the 'Check-Your-Pool-Gate' initiative with Laurie three years ago, to help eliminate childhood drownings caused by faulty pool gates.

"Our recent survey of pool owners showed that one in five pool owners with kids under eleven had no idea what elements to check in their pool area to make it safe, and only 55% said they knew their pool gate complied with all Australian Standards. Our aim with 'National Check-Your-Pool-Gate Month' is to educate pool owners about pool safety and to encourage them to check their pool surrounds not once a year, but regularly."

Mr Clark said it only took a few minutes for pool owners to check that their pool fences and gates, including latches and hinges, were in good working order. This simple routine done regularly could save the life of a child.

"Alarmingly, our survey revealed that one in three pool owners don't check the safety of their pool area because they don't have small children. All pool owners are responsible for ensuring that no child has access to their pool, as it only takes seconds for a child to wander into a pool area and the consequences can be tragic."

This year, Bunnings is also supporting the initiative hosting educational sessions in select stores around the country on Saturday December 7. They will help pool owners understand how to check the safety of their pool surrounds and how to install the safest pool fence and gate equipment.

Locations and times can be found at [www.checkyourpoolgate.com.au](http://www.checkyourpoolgate.com.au)

Safety checklist for pool gates (download at [www.checkyourpoolgate.com.au](http://www.checkyourpoolgate.com.au))

- Gate should open outwards, away from the pool
- Latch release knob should be at least 1500mm above ground level
- Gate must be self-closing and self-latching

- Gate hinges should be rust-free and bind-free
- Gate should carry reliable, tension-adjustable hinges
- Latch must be adjustable for height and width.
- Hinges must be adjustable for closing tension.
- Latch cannot be key locked in the “open” position
- Latch cannot be disengaged using implements
- Gate latch cannot be shaken or jolted open
- Gate will shut securely from any open angle or force
- Gate complies with all Australian Standards for pool safety

A full safety checklist can be downloaded at [www.checkyourpoolgate.com.au](http://www.checkyourpoolgate.com.au) .

\*Survey of 1,002 Australian pool owners conducted by Pure Profile for D&D Technologies, November 2019.

\*\*Royal Life Saving Australia - NSW Child Drowning Report: A 15-year analysis of causal factors for drowning of children under 5 years in private swimming pools 2002/03-2016/17

\*\*\*Royal Life Saving Australia – National Drowning Report 2019

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