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## AAA: Simple steps to swimming safety

### AAA shares pool safety tips

By AAA of Western and Central New York

Summer is in full swing, and Independence Day weekend was full of pool parties and beach getaways. Unfortunately, every year in the United States, there are an estimated 4,000 unintentional drownings, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drowning is also one of the leading causes of unintentional death in children between the ages of 1 and 9, while children ages 1-4 have the highest drowning rates. Most drownings among children aged 1-4 happen in swimming pools. Many of these fatalities occur even with supervision.

AAA Insurance has tips leading into pool season for parents and caregivers.

"When warmer weather arrives, it's great to beat the heat in a pool. But pool owners and their family and friends should be aware of basic pool safety tips to make sure swimming is safe and fun for everyone," said Sandra Shambaugh, vice president of insurance at AAA Western and Central New York.

- Have proper pool equipment:
  - √ Use a safety cover when your pool is not in use. Pool covers should tightly cover the entire pool so children or pets cannot slip underneath.
  - √ Surround your pool with a fence or other barrier.
  - √ Keep your pool clean and clear, and keep children away from pool filters and other mechanical devices.

- √ Keep lifesaving equipment nearby. Life rings, floats or a reaching pole should be easily accessible.

- Learn and teach water safety skills:
  - √ Supervise children at all times. Have inexperienced swimmers swim stay with an adult in the pool and wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved vest.

- √ Limit alcohol use. The CDC reports that alcohol is involved in 70% of all teen and adult deaths associated with water recreation.

- √ Regularly check the pool area for any potential accident hazards.

- √ Don't leave toys or floats in the pool when it's not in use. Kids may fall into the pool trying to reach them.

- √ Take CPR and first aid training or refresh your training. Those trainings save lives every year.

It's important to contact your insurance company and let your insurance agent know if you have a pool to make sure you have the right coverage. Learn more at [www.AAA.com/Insurance](http://www.AAA.com/Insurance).

As upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 862,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. Visit AAA at [www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com).

## CAN YOU HELP?

### North Tonawanda father & grandfather seeking kidney transplant

Submitted by the Kidney Foundation of WNY

Paul Kupiec is a longtime North Tonawanda resident. He and his wife, MaryBeth, enjoy joining in community events and activities, but health issues now limit his energy and options. Kupiec and his family hope that a kidney transplant will give him a new lease on life.

Kupiec spent almost 30 years as a stationary engineer at DeGraff Memorial Hospital, keeping boilers, coolers and mechanical systems running until kidney disease forced him to go out on disability.

"I like working with my hands," said Kupiec, who also used to enjoy woodworking, fishing and travel. "We used to ride motorcycles, but we're not doing that anymore – I guess all the things we really like to do we can't really do right now."

Though Kupiec has had diabetes for nearly two decades, his kidney function declined quickly after 2019.

"I knew that diabetes can damage your kidneys, but it came on fast," he said.

Kupiec started dialysis in 2021 and immediately began looking into getting a kidney transplant.

"It didn't seem like it was real," he recalled.

While dialysis has been working well for him, he is still dealing with



Paul Kupiec hopes a kidney transplant will allow him to spend more quality time with his family, including his grandchildren. (Submitted)

fatigue, anemia, dizziness, blood pressure issues and more. Preparing for the transplant has required Kupiec to undergo several medical procedures, including the placement of a stent, and ankle surgery.

With many tests and medical

treatments behind him, Kupiec is now on the active kidney transplant waiting list at Erie County Medical Center. The improved health and freedom made possible by a transplant would allow him to spend more quality time with his children and grandchildren, and to travel with his wife.

The Kupiec family is sharing Paul's story in hopes that a living donor will come forward. They've been working with the Kidney Foundation of WNY on strategies to reach friends and neighbors who might consider living organ donation or just help spread

the word. MaryBeth Kupiec is posting updates to Facebook tagged #AKidneyForKoop and family members have ordered decals for their cars to spread the word.

"Kidney health issues are often invisible. Sharing Paul's story and

others like it helps to increase awareness about kidney disease and the need for organ donors," said Jeremy Morlock, director of the Kidney Foundation of WNY. "Anyone can sign up through the Donate Life New York State Registry and possibly save eight lives through organ donation. The kidney is the most needed organ for transplant. Kidneys are special because of the option for living donation – many healthy people have two kidneys and can live a full and active life after donating one."

One in every seven U.S. adults is affected by chronic kidney disease, but many don't know it. Signs and symptoms often go unnoticed until a person has lost up to 90% of their kidney function. The leading causes of chronic kidney disease are high blood pressure and diabetes.

Morlock noted that anyone wishing to learn about kidney health, treatment and transplantation can contact the Kidney Foundation of WNY at 716-529-4390 or visit [kfwny.org](http://kfwny.org). The foundation has resources for people with kidney disease, including those in need of a transplant.

To be evaluated as a potential living kidney donor through ECMC, call 716-898-6283 or email [nhaseley@ecmc.edu](mailto:nhaseley@ecmc.edu). Information is also available at [www.ecmc.edu](http://www.ecmc.edu).

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#### PUBLISHER

Skip Mazenauer  
GM/MANAGING EDITOR

Joshua Maloni

#### EDITOR IN CHIEF/SENTINEL EDITOR

Terrence P. Duffy

#### WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Joshua Maloni

#### ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Colleen Rebmann, Jeff Calarco

#### ACCOUNTING/OFFICE MANAGER

Kim Stacharczyk

#### ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Jennifer Walowitz

#### PRODUCTION MANAGER/ GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Wendy Juzwicki

#### CLASSIFIED MANAGER

Wendy Puffer

#### CIRCULATION

Kim Stacharczyk

#### SENIOR REPORTERS

Michael J. Billoni, Patrick J. Bradley,

Alice Gerard, Karen Keefe

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Timothy Chipp, Kevin and Dawn Cobello,

Michelle Blackley Glynn, Wayne Peters,

Elijah Robinson, Lauren Zaepfel

#### ©2023 Niagara Frontier Publications

1859 Whitehaven Road  
Grand Island, N.Y. 14072

Phone 716-773-7676  
Fax 716-773-7190

#### Editorial:

Dispatch@wnypapers.com  
Sentinel@wnypapers.com

#### Advertising:

NFPDesign@wnypapers.com

#### Classifieds:

NFPClassifieds@wnypapers.com

#### Circulation:

NFPCirculation@wnypapers.com

#### Legals:

legalnotice@wnypapers.com

#### Website:

wnypapers.com

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