

Fact Sheet on Drowning

What is drowning?

- Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion or immersion in liquid. Drowning happens when a person's nose and mouth are under water for too long, making it impossible to breathe.¹
- Drowning can be fatal (results in death) or non-fatal (does not result in death).
- Drowning survivors may experience a wide range of health outcomes - from having no injuries to more serious outcomes such as brain injuries and permanent disability.
- Drowning can occur in seconds and is often silent.

Drowning in the United States

- More than 4,000 drowning deaths and over 8,000 emergency department visits for non-fatal drowning occur in the United States every year.²
- Drowning is the leading cause of death among children aged 1-4 years in the United States and the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children aged 5-14 years.²

Risk factors for drowning

Age: Young children, especially aged 1-4 years, are at increased risk.²

Sex: Males drown at rates over three times the rate of females.²

Medical Conditions: Seizure disorders, autism spectrum disorder and heart conditions can increase drowning risk.³

Substance Use: Using alcohol, drugs or prescription medications can increase drowning risk as they may impair consciousness and motor skills.^{4,5}

Socioeconomic Status: Drowning rates are higher in communities with lower socioeconomic status.⁶

Five tips to prevent drowning

- Install four-sided pool fencing with self-closing, self-latching gates that completely isolates the pool from the house.
- Wear life jackets while boating. Life jackets can also be worn when in and around natural bodies of water and swimming pools to reduce drowning risk.
- Learn basic swimming and water safety skills.
- Supervise children closely and constantly anytime they are in or near water. Choose swimming sites that are supervised by lifeguards when possible.
- Learn basic water rescue skills and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



References

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