

Water Safety - Outdoors

Care Provider Bulletin

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Did you know?

- Thousands of people drown in the United States each year. Most drownings occur within a short distance of safety.
- Immediate action and first aid can prevent death.
- Most fatal drownings occur with poor or no supervision.
- If a person falls into cold water their body temperature drops very quickly and can cause hypothermia.
- Any source of water is a potential drowning hazard, especially for young children and weak swimmers.

Who is at increased risk of drowning?

- Young children.
- Individuals who cannot swim.
- Individuals with mobility challenges.
- Individuals who are drawn to or fascinated with water and may not understand the dangers.



Responding to a water emergency

- If someone is missing, check the water first.
- Only enter the water if you have strong swimming skills and it is safe to do so; it is better to use a rope or other object to pull a person to shore.
- Call 911.
- Call out for help.
- If the person has stopped breathing, start rescue breaths, which you may need to start in the water. Start CPR once they are safely to shore.
- Be careful when handling the person, in case they have an injury.
- Remove wet clothing and cover the person in blankets or warm clothing.
- Provide first aid for any injuries.
- Assist the person to remain calm.
- Assist the person to seek medical attention if they seem okay, as there could be complications that are not visible right away.

Prevention

- Swimming lessons can be lifesaving.
- Only swim in areas monitored by lifeguards.
- Never swim alone.
- Have someone supervise individuals swimming in the water, even if a lifeguard is on duty.
- Know where the closest lifeguard or other help is.
- Don't mix alcohol consumption and water activities.
- Never leave someone with mobility challenges alone near a body of water. Provide constant supervision and remain within arm's reach.
- Provide 1:1 supervision for individuals with a seizure disorder when near water.
- Young children or individuals who cannot swim should wear a coast guard approved life jacket. Do not use water toys such as noodles or water wings in place of life jackets.
- Participate in water safety, first aid, and CPR courses. Red Cross can be one resource for these trainings.
- Have a cell phone within reach in case of an emergency.
- Have items close by that could be thrown to someone having trouble in the water such as ropes with buoys, long branches, etc.
- Become familiar with the signs of hypothermia – drowsiness, weakness and loss of coordination, pale and cold skin, confusion, uncontrollable shivering, slowed breathing or heart rate.
- Be familiar with current water and weather conditions and watch for any changes.
- Find out about advisories for swimming beaches to the Department of Health's website: www.doh.wa.gov.
- Stay far back from the water's edge to avoid accidentally falling in.
- Know how to tell if someone in the water is in distress or is drowning –
 - Someone in the water fully clothed
 - Uneven swimming motions, which may be a sign that the swimmer is getting tired
 - The person's body is sinking and only their head is above water
- Read more about preventing unintentional drowning on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov.

**Be wise and supervise,
it could save a life!**



Sources & Resources

- **Red Cross, Water Safety**, www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts**, www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreational-safety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html
- **Water Safety USA**, www.watersafetyusa.org/
- **National Park Service, Water Safety in the National Park Service**, www.nps.gov/articles/watersafety.htm
- **MedlinePlus, Near Drowning**, medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000046.htm