



Water Safety Outdoors

Did you know?

- Thousands of people drown in the United States each year.
- Most drownings happen when there is poor or no supervision.
- Immediate action and first aid can prevent death.
- 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.



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.

What are the signs someone needs help or is drowning?

- Someone is in the water fully clothed.
- Uneven swimming motions can be a sign the swimmer is getting tired.
- The person is sinking and only their head is above water.

Sources and Resources

Red Cross, Water Safety, <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts, <https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>

Water Safety USA, <https://www.watersafetyusa.org/>

National Park Service, Water Safety, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/oceans/water-safety.htm>

MedlinePlus, Near Drowning, <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000046.htm>



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

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How should I respond to a water emergency?

- If someone is missing, check the water first.
- Call 911.
- Call out for help.
- Only enter the water if you have strong swimming skills and it is safe to do so. Use a rope or other object to pull a person to shore.
- Help the person to remain calm.
- 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.
- Provide first aid for any injuries.
- Remove wet clothing and cover the person in blankets or warm clothing.
- Encourage the person to seek medical attention even if they seem okay. There could be complications that are not visible right away.

Prevention

- Never swim alone.
- Swimming lessons can be lifesaving.
- Only swim in areas monitored by lifeguards.
- 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 and water activities.
- Never leave someone with mobility challenges alone near water. Provide constant supervision and stay within arm's reach.
- Provide one-on-one supervision for individuals with a seizure disorder when near water.
- Young children or others 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.
- Take classes on water safety, first aid and CPR. 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.
- Know the signs of hypothermia – drowsiness, weakness and loss of coordination, pale and cold skin, confusion, uncontrollable shivering, slowed breathing or heart rate.
- Watch for changes in water and weather conditions.
- Find out about advisories for swimming beaches on the Department of Health's website: <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/water-recreation/beach-advisories>.
- Stay far back from the water's edge to avoid accidentally falling in.
- Encourage the person to seek medical attention even if they seem okay. There could be complications that are not visible right away.

