

MSDE Division of Early Childhood: Office of Child Care
Prevention of Accidental Drowning & Child Care Responsibilities

About one in five people who die from drowning are children 14 and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Most children drown within a few feet of safety and in the presence of a supervising adult.

Drowning is one of the leading causes of unintentional death in children one to fourteen years of age.

During drowning, cold exposure provides the possibility of protection of the brain from irreversible damage associated with respiratory and cardiac arrest. Children drown in as little as two inches of water.

The difference between a life and death situation is the submersion time. Thirty seconds can make a difference.

1. Safety Rules:

- a) Review the safety rules with children each time children are taken for swimming.
- b) The Child Care providers should develop and review an emergency plan each time children are taken for swimming, and follow the Written Plan.
- c) Train the staff for handling urgent/life threatening Incidents (Drowning).

2. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR):

- a) Supervising staff must be CPR certified.
- b) In the time it takes for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills could save child's life.

3. Supervise When In or Around Water:

- a) Designate a responsible adult to watch young children while in the bath and all children swimming or playing in or around water.
- b) Staff should provide "touch supervision", be close enough to reach the child at all times.
- c) Staff should not be involved in any other distracting activity (such as reading, playing cards, talking on the phone, or mowing the lawn) while supervising children, even if lifeguards are present.

4. Use the Buddy System:

- a) Pair the children to swim with a buddy.
- b) Select swimming sites that have lifeguards when possible.

5. Swimming Lesson:

- a) Make sure children have attended formal swimming lessons. Formal swimming lessons can protect young children from drowning.

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- b) Provide touch supervision even when children have had formal swimming lessons.

6. Air-Filled or Foam Toys are not safety devices:

- a) Don't use air-filled or foam toys, such as "water wings", "noodles", or inner-tubes, instead of life jackets.
- b) These toys are not life jackets and are not designed to keep swimmers safe.

7. Don't let swimmers hyperventilate before swimming underwater or try to hold their breath for long periods:

This can cause them to pass out (sometimes-called "hypoxic blackout" or "shallow water blackout") and drown.

8. Know the local weather conditions and forecast:

Strong winds and thunderstorms with lightning strikes are dangerous.

9. Children with special care needs:

Provide one-on-one supervision around water, including swimming pools.

If you have a swimming pool at home:

1. Install Four-Sided Fencing.

- a) Install a four-sided pool fence that completely separates the pool area from the house and yard.
- b) The fence should be at least 4 feet high.
- c) Use self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward with latches that are out of reach of children.
- d) Also, consider additional barriers such as automatic door locks and alarms to prevent access or alert you if someone enters the pool area.

2. Clear the Pool and Deck of Toys.

Remove floats, balls and other toys from the pool and surrounding area immediately after use so children are not tempted to enter the pool area unsupervised.

References:

CDC (2016). Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts.

<https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>

Caring for our Children Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards (2019). Pool Safety Rules. <https://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf>