

Swimming and drowning facts relating to children:

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 1 to 14. The majority of drownings and near-drownings occur in residential swimming pools and in open water sites. However, children can drown in as little as one inch of water and are therefore at risk of drowning in wading pools, bathtubs, buckets, diaper pails, toilets, spas and hot tubs.

Drowning usually occurs quickly and silently. Childhood drownings and near-drownings can happen in a matter of seconds and typically occur when a child is left unattended or during a brief lapse in supervision. Two minutes following submersion, a child will lose consciousness. Irreversible brain damage occurs after four to six minutes and determines the immediate and long-term survival of a child. The majority of children who survive (92 percent) are discovered within two minutes following submersion, and most children who die (86 percent) are found after 10 minutes. Nearly all who require cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) die or are left with severe brain injury.

WHEN AND WHERE DROWNINGS AND NEAR-DROWNINGS OCCUR

- More than half of drownings among infants (under age 1) occur in bathtubs. Drownings in this age group also occur in toilets and buckets. More than half of drownings among children ages 1 to 4 are pool-related. Children ages 5 to 14 most often drown in open water sites.
- Since 1984, more than 327 children, 89 percent between the ages of 7 months and 15 months, have drowned in buckets containing water or other liquids used for mopping floors and other household chores. It is estimated that 30 children drown annually in buckets.
- More than 10 percent of childhood drownings occur in bathtubs; the majority of these occur in the absence of adult supervision. Since 1983, there have been at least 104 deaths and 162 non-fatal incidents involving baby bath seats.
- Among children ages 4 and under, there are approximately 300 residential swimming pool drownings each year. More than half of these drownings occur in the child's home pool, and one-third occur at the homes of friends, neighbors or relatives.
- Most children who drown in swimming pools were last seen in the home, had been missing from sight for less than five minutes and were in the care of one or both parents at the time of the drowning.

PREVENTION TIPS

- Never leave a child unsupervised in or around water in the home. Empty all containers immediately after use and store out of reach.
- Never leave a child unsupervised in or around a swimming pool or spa, even for a moment. Never rely on a PFD or swimming lessons to protect a child. Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, a telephone and emergency numbers poolside.

- Install four-sided isolation fencing, at least five feet high and equipped with self-closing and self-latching gates, around a home pool or spa. Fencing should completely surround swimming pools or spas and prevent direct access from a house or yard. Never prop open the gate to a pool barrier or leave toys in and around the pool.
- Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved PFD when on a boat, near open bodies of water or when participating in water sports. Air-filled swimming aids, such as “water wings,” are not considered safety devices and are not substitutes for PFDs.
- Never dive into water less than nine feet deep.
- Children ages 14 and under should never operate a personal watercraft.

Source: Safe Kids.org