

What You Know About Drowning Could be Wrong

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Water is as much a part of us as we are a part of it we need water to live, to thrive, to recharge. And in Florida, we are lucky to be surrounded by so many revitalizing slices of paradise.

Beach days. Pool parties. Lake trips. Water parks. Boating. Paddleboarding. Kayaking. You likely associate these activities with fun and sun-kissed smiles. But the waters serenity is also met with equal doses of sheer force, and at times, great unpredictability that can take a life in seconds.

When we flock to the water for amusement, we must also know that water demands a healthy dose of respect and heightened awareness to prevent water-related accidents, the most serious being drowning. That said, people often have misconceptions about what drowning is, what it looks like and how to help prevent it.

Is what you know about drowning wrong?

With the goal to help your family enjoy the water's beauty safely, AdventHealth explains the facts.

Drowning Defined

Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in a liquid.

With this, there are varying levels of severity, from no injury to some injury and at the most serious end of the spectrum, death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries.

This is just one unsettling statistic.

Drowning is the Third Leading Cause of Accidental Death Worldwide

Worldwide, drowning is the third leading cause of accidental death, after deaths due to road traffic and falls, and in the United States, there are over 3,000 unintentional drownings per year.

And in Florida, the numbers are staggering:

- Florida leads the nation in drownings due to submersed motor vehicles
- Florida ranks in the top ten for other forms of drowning
- For children ages one to four, drowning is the leading cause of injury death in the US.
- Children age one to five is 14 times more likely to die in a swimming pool than a motor vehicle

Perhaps the reason these stories are so heartbreaking is that most of these accidents could be prevented by understanding drowning risks, knowing what drowning really looks like, and implementing water safety measures.

Drowning Risks by Age

The dangers of drowning change with age.

So, if you understand what the risks are, you can be more mindful around water. For example, if your baby is age one or under, you should know that bathtubs pose the greatest drowning risk never leave standing water in a bathtub and always supervise your infant in the tub.

Here are some of the greatest drowning risks by age group:

Birth to Age 1:

- Bathtubs
- Buckets
- Toilets

Ages 1 to 5:

- Swimming pools

Teenagers:

- Lakes
- Rivers
- Ocean

One surprising fact is that most teenage drownings occur (90 percent) within ten yards of safety.

And even though 20 percent of drownings occur in children ages 14 and under, it can happen to adults, too. Exhaustion, weak swimming skills, medical emergencies and trauma can all lead to accidental drowning.

Drowning is Often Silent

Thrashing. Splashing. Calling for help.

We've all seen this terrifying scene in a movie. And you might think this is what drowning looks like. If this is what you are looking for in a crowd of swimmers, you might miss the distressed swimmer struggling silently right behind you.

Many drowning victims silently slip below the water's surface. You can't count on hearing shouts for help you must be vigilant if you are responsible for others around water, especially if there are many people around.

There is no Substitute for Supervision

Of all the swim safety tips, one stands out as the most important:

Swimming lessons, even beginning as a baby, can be great experiences, but there is no substitute for supervision.

Some parents mistakenly think that their infant or toddlers swim lessons made them safe; however, after summer is over and they go several months without swimming, they will likely not remember what they learned by the following summer.

The same stands true for teens and young adults, who often engage in riskier behaviors that could increase their chances of a water-related accident.

Here's a helpful tip on how to always ensure adequate supervision.

Always Designate a Lifeguard

Certified lifeguards stand post at the community pool or public beach, but what about your home or neighbors pool?

It's surprising how children are at risk when adults are present, and it's actually common in the case of drowning. People think that the more adults there are, the safer it is; however, what usually ends up happening, is that adults assume other adults are paying attention, with the result being that no one is paying attention.

Turning Facts into Lives Saved

If you learned something from this article, we empower you to turn your facts into lives saved. Enjoy the water around you, but with caution and awareness for your safety as well as those around you, especially small children who carry the highest drowning risks.

If you ever experience a water-related emergency, call 911 and head to your [nearest emergency room](#) right away.

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