



## PATIENT AND FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

### *Drowning or Near-Drowning*

#### What is Drowning or Near-drowning?

Drowning is the inability to breathe from being submerged or immersed in a liquid, resulting in death. Near drowning is surviving a submersion event.

Drowning victims breathe in liquid rather than air, either from gasping upon falling into the water or from the breathing reflex that happens after long breath holding. Inhaling water blocks the lung's ability to work and can lead to heart attack and possibly death.

Children can drown in as little as 20 seconds, adult in as little as 60 seconds.

Children who have drowned and been resuscitated should always be taken to an Emergency Room for treatment, as lung swelling and irritation can cause death hours or even days after the event.

Signs of serious breathing problems after rescue from drowning:

- Trouble breathing
- Coughing
- Choking
- Sleepiness
- Irritability (fussiness)
- Vomiting (throwing up)



Lifebelt, hand, lake, drowning, water, sea, rescue [digital image]. (n.d.)  
Retrieved from <https://www.maxpixel.net/Sea-Lifebelt-Drowning-Water-Lake-Hand-Rescue-4148444>.

#### What to do if you find a drowning victim?

Quick first aid and medical attention are very important. Send someone to call 911. If the victim is not breathing and without a pulse, start CPR by doing chest compressions and giving breaths. You will give 30 compressions and two breaths until help arrives. Do chest compressions at a rate of 100 beats per minute.

**DO NOT PLACE YOURSELF IN DANGER. ONLY GET INTO THE WATER IF YOU KNOW IT IS SAFE.**

You may throw or reach something out to the victim for them to grab and pull them in to safety (i.e. Life ring, pole, oar, stick).



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#### What are the problems with drowning?

- Heart Attack
- Brain swelling, stroke, or brain death from lack of oxygen
- Seizures (fit of uncontrolled movements)
- Coma (a sleep-like state where a person is not aware or awake)
- Pneumonia (a lung infection)

#### How is drowning treated?

Drowning victims need oxygen and may need a breathing tube or special mask if they cannot breathe for themselves. In severe cases, machines to support the heart and lungs are needed.

Drowning victims who survive need to be watched closely by medical staff for worsening signs and symptoms.

#### Who is most at risk for drowning?

- Children ages 1 – 4 years
- Males
- Minorities



Coast Guard Compass. (2015.) Children in life jackets [digital image].  
Retrieved from  
[https://coastguard.dodlive.mil/files/2015/05/03\\_05\\_1\\_1C\\_0151.jpg](https://coastguard.dodlive.mil/files/2015/05/03_05_1_1C_0151.jpg).

#### How to Prevent Drowning

- Have children wear a life jacket when near body of water, on a boat or watercraft. Floaties or water wings are not an okay option and do not safely prevent drowning.
- Watch children swimming with floaties or water wings closely, as this gives a false sense of safety.
- Never leave a baby or young child alone in the bathtubs, pools, ponds, spas, irrigation ditches.
- Do not leave any standing water in basins, buckets/pails, ice chests, kiddie pools, or bathtubs.
- Close toilet lids and use seat locks.
- Always choose an adult water watcher with swimming skills to constantly supervise children in and around water. The water watcher should not be distracted by other activities such as texting, tending chores or drinking alcohol.



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#### **How to Prevent Drowning (*continued*)**

- Use many layers of safety around pools. These include locks on doors, 4-sided isolation fencing, alarms on doors and windows leading to the pool. Fences should be at least 4 ft. high with self-closing, self-latching gates.
- Fence the yard that has a pool or spa. Use pool alarms or weight bearing pool covers.
- Make sure that the pool has compliant drain covers and teach children to stay away from the drains while swimming.
- Remove portable pool ladders when not in use.
- Learn how to swim and teach children to be skilled swimmers.
- Never swim alone. Make sure teens swim with a buddy every time.
- Keep phone and rescue equipment at poolside.
- If your child is missing, check the pool first.
- Learn CPR.

#### **When can we go home?**

When your child's breathing and vital signs have been stable and he/she is eating well, you may be able to go home. Your medical providers will decide when they feel your child is safe to go home.

#### **How do I care for my child at home?**

Your child may need some time to return to normal activity, so allow him/her to take their time.

Your child may return to school on \_\_\_\_\_.

If you are being sent home with any medical equipment, you should be taught how to use it before going home.

#### **When should I call the office?**

*If your child experiences any of the following, please call our office:*

- Fever
- Cough
- For any questions or concerns regarding your child's care



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#### **When should I return to the Emergency Room?**

- Serious signs of breathing problems such as:
  - Trouble breathing
  - Coughing
  - Choking
  - Sleepiness
  - Irritability (fussiness)
  - Vomiting (throwing up)
- Seizure
- Any other medical concerns or for symptoms listed by your provider to seek medical attention

*Your child will need to follow up with your medical provider. You will receive specific instructions for follow up when your child is discharged.*

Please don't hesitate to call our office if you have any problems or concerns.

Medical provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Number: \_\_\_\_\_

After hours number, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for allowing us to care for your child.*