



## Near-Drowning

**Near-drowning** is when a person is in danger of drowning.

Each year, almost 8,000 people die from drowning. Seventy percent of all near-drowning victims recover; 25% die, and 5% have brain damage.

A toddler can drown in as little as 2 inches of water in a bathtub, sink, etc. Toilet bowls are unsafe, too, if a small child falls into one head-first.

## Signs & Symptoms

- A person is in the water with signs of distress. He or she can't stay above water, swims unevenly, signals for help, etc.
- Blue lips or ears. The skin is cold and pale.
- Bloated abdomen. Vomiting. Choking.
- Confusion. Lethargy.
- The person does not respond or can't breathe.

## Causes

- Not being able to swim. Being in water too deep and too rough for one's ability to swim.
- Water sport and other accidents. Not following water safety rules. Not wearing a life preserver, etc. Unsupervised swimming.
- Falling through ice while fishing, skating, etc.
- Injury or problems that occur while swimming, boating, etc. Examples are leg or stomach cramps, fatigue, and alcohol or drug use. A heart attack, stroke, seizure, and a marine animal bite or sting may have occurred.

## Treatment

Immediate medical care is needed for near-drowning.

## Questions to Ask

Is the person unconscious and not breathing? Or, does the person have blue lips and ears and is the skin cold and pale? Give **First Aid for Near-Drowning** below.



NO

Does the person in the water show any of these signs?

- Waves or shouts for help.
- Swims in uneven motions.
- Can't stay above water.

{**Note:** Give **First Aid for Near-Drowning** below.}



NO

After a near-drowning incident, does the person have a fever, a cough, or muscle pain?



NO



## Self-Care / First Aid

### First Aid for Near-Drowning

- Shout for help! Send someone to call **9-1-1**!
- If it is safe and possible, try to reach the person. Use a long pole, rope, life preserver, etc. Then pull him or her to safety.
- Did the person fall through ice? Try a human chain rescue to safely reach the person, but stay as far away from cracked ice as you can.



## Prevention

### For Children

- Never leave an infant or child alone in any type of bathtub. Supervise young children in the bathroom.
- Never leave a child alone near water, swimming pools, etc. Lock gates to keep children from getting near swimming pools.
- Have a phone near outdoor pools, etc.
- Teach children to swim. Tell them not to swim alone and not to swim too far from shore without a lifeguard or other adult swimmer.
- Put a personal floatation device on each child when near the water or on a boat.
- Tell children to check the depth of water before diving in. It should be at least 9 feet deep.
- Do not allow children to go on untested ice.
- Take CPR and water safety courses.

## Near-Drowning, Continued

- If you must swim to the person, be sure you are strong and capable enough. Take a flotation device with you. Approach the person from behind in a calm manner. Grab a piece of the person's clothing. Or, cup one hand under the person's chin.
- When getting the person out of the water, support the head and neck. (Suspect a neck injury, especially with diving or water sports.)
- **CHECK for a response.** (See Step 2 at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).) Give **Rescue Breaths** and **CPR** (see at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com)), as needed. If you suspect a spinal injury, use jaw thrust instead of chin-lift for rescue breaths.
- Once out of the water, keep checking the person for a response. Give first aid, as needed.
- Put the person in the **Recovery Position**. (See at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).) Immobilize the person as much as possible. If the person is vomiting, clear his or her mouth of it.
- Remove cold, wet clothes. Cover the person with a blanket, etc.

## Prevention

### For Adults

- Learn to swim. Never swim alone at the beach or in a swimming pool. A lifeguard or other adult swimmer should be nearby in case you suffer a leg cramp or other problem.
- Wear a personal floatation device when you are on a boat, when you fish, etc.
- Check the depth of the water before diving in. It should be at least 9 feet deep. Never dive into an above-ground pool.
- Do not use a hot tub or jacuzzi if you've had any alcoholic drinks. You could fall asleep, slip under the surface, and drown.
- Take CPR and water safety courses.



*Children should wear a personal floatation device.*