

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

How to prevent your child from drowning

Some kids can swim well, like fish in the water, but they still are in danger of drowning.

More than 1,000 children die each year from drowning, according to a new study in the journal *Pediatrics*. If a child survives, he likely will have brain damage and long-term disability such as learning problems or not being able to care for himself.

Children ages 0-4 years and adolescent boys are at the highest risk of drowning. Young children are most likely to drown in the bathtub or after accidentally falling into water. The study also found that adolescent boys are four to six times more likely to drown than girls, mostly because they think their swimming skills are better than they really are, and they are more likely to take risks.



Here are some steps parents can take to help prevent their child from drowning.

- Have your child take swimming lessons. Recent evidence shows that swimming lessons for children under 4 years of age will decrease their likelihood of drowning by 88%.
- If you have a pool in your backyard, fence it in on all four sides with self-closing, self-locking gates opening outward. The barrier should be at least 4 feet tall so children can't climb over it. If your house is one side of the barrier, use an alarm system to alert you if your child goes outside.
- Do not use the pool if drain covers are missing. Long hair, arms, legs and fingers can get stuck in the drain's current and pull a child under water.
- Make sure someone is watching children in the pool at all times.
- When you're done swimming, take pool toys with you. If a young child sees a toy in the pool, she might try to reach for it and fall into the water.

— Shayna Starr

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