

Doctor's Bag



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First Aid for a Near-Drowning Victim

Do you know what to do for a near-drowning victim? Do you know CPR?

Bystanders who know what to do and are certified in CPR are a drowning victim's greatest chance for survival.

Treatment begins as soon as the near-drowning victim is out of the water. Things need to happen quickly. One bystander should call 911 and arrange for emergency services while another begins the first aid process.

The first step in the process is to determine whether or not the victim is breathing and if there is a pulse. If no pulse is detected and the patient is not breathing, CPR should be started immediately. If none of the bystanders know CPR, the 911 operator can provide first aid information.

If the drowning victim is breathing but unconscious, he or she should be rolled onto their side to prevent aspiration if vomiting should occur.

These are very basic steps. WebMD (www.webmd.com) and The American Red Cross (www.redcross.org) are both excellent Internet references for information about water safety and first aid training.

You can sign up for first aid and CPR training through the American Red Cross by calling the local chapter.

HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

Help Prevent Water-Related Injuries

If you are headed to the local swimming pool or beach – or if you're lucky enough to have a backyard pool – here are some helpful water-safety hints, compliments of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

SUPERVISE CHILDREN

Designate a responsible adult to watch young children swimming or playing in or around water. Supervisors of preschool children should provide "touch supervision" – be close enough to reach the child at all times. Adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity (such as reading, playing cards, talking on the phone or mowing the lawn) while supervising children.



USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Always swim with a buddy. Select swimming sites that have lifeguards whenever possible.

AVOID ALCOHOL

Avoid drinking alcohol before or during swimming, boating or water skiing. Do not drink alcohol while supervising children.

LEARN TO SWIM

Formal swimming lessons can prevent young children from drowning. However, constant and careful supervision and barriers such as pool fencing are necessary even when children have completed swimming lessons.

USE A LIFE JACKET

Do not use air-filled or foam devices such as water wings, noodles or inner tubes in place of life jackets. These "toys" are not designed to keep swimmers safe.

CHECK THE WEATHER BEFORE YOU GO

Know the local weather conditions and forecast before swimming or boating. Strong winds and thunderstorms with lightning strikes are very dangerous.

LEARN CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR)

In the time it might take for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills could make the difference between life and death.

DidUKnow?

- In 2007, there were 3,443 fatal unintentional drownings in the United States, averaging ten deaths per day. An additional 496 people died, from drowning and other causes, as a result of boating-related incidents.
- More than one in five fatal drowning victims are children age 14 and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another four received emergency care for nonfatal submersion injuries.
- Nonfatal drownings can cause brain damage that may result in long-term disabilities including memory problems, learning disabilities and permanent loss of basic functioning (e.g., permanent vegetative state).
- Fatal drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death for children ages 1-14 years.
- The fatal drowning rate of African American children ages 5-14 is more than three times that of caucasian children in the same age group.

Information Source:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Injury Prevention & Control: Home and Recreational Safety, "Unintentional Drowning: Fact Sheet," last reviewed and updated June 7, 2010 www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html