



# DROWNING PREVENTION

## Why It Matters for Pool Operators

Drowning is quick, silent, and preventable. As a pool operator, you play a vital role in keeping swimmers safe and ensuring your facility meets the highest safety standards. Every year, drowning remains one of the leading causes of unintentional death—especially for young children. Even when a person survives, the lack of oxygen can cause lifelong challenges—affecting memory, behavior, and brain function.

**“4,000**  
people die from drowning per year in the U.S.”

**The actions you take today can make the difference between a fun day at the pool and a tragedy.**



### Stage

### Info

### Signs

#### 1 THE STRUGGLE

**VICTIM WORKS TO STAY ABOVE WATER**

Struggling to keep head above water, moving arms frantically

#### 2 INVOLUNTARY BREATH HOLDING

**SHORT OR NONEXISTENT; WATER TRIGGERS EPIGLOTTIS CLOSURE, PREVENTING BREATHING**

Heavy or irregular breathing, unnatural movements, head low in water, mouth at water level, glassy eyes

#### 3 UNCONSCIOUSNESS

**PROLONGED OXYGEN DEPRIVATION**

Unresponsive, lack of movement, cold or bluish skin

#### 4 HYPOXIC CONVULSIONS

**BRAIN REACTS TO LACK OF OXYGEN**

Seizure-like activity, spasms, rigidity, slowed heartbeat, no breathing

#### 5 CARDIAC ARREST

**HEART BEGINS TO FAIL DUE TO LACK OF OXYGEN**

Slowing or weakening of heartbeat, absence of pulse

#### 6 CLINICAL DEATH

**COMPLETE LACK OF OXYGEN AND CIRCULATION**

Heartbeat completely stops



- Drowning is often **silent and fast**.
- Early recognition and quick action save lives.
- CPR and AED use can **significantly improve survival** and reduce long-term harm.



# IMMEDIATE ACTION: SAVING A LIFE

1

**Remove From Water Safely**  
Support head and neck and call 911.

## Open the Airway

Place the person on their back, tilt head gently, being mindful of possible injuries.

2

3

**Check Responsiveness/Breathing**  
If they are responsive and breathing, place them on their side in the recovery position to help drain fluids and prevent choking.

## If Not Breathing/Unresponsive

Give **5 rescue breaths** (seal mouth, pinch nose).

4

## Begin CPR

- Perform **30 chest compressions** at a rate of **100 to 120 beats per minute**, pushing hard and fast.
- Follow with **2 rescue breaths**.
- Continue cycles of 30 compressions and 2 breaths.

5

The song  
"Stayin' Alive"  
sets the  
perfect pace

## Continue Until Medical Help Arrive

Continue CPR until medical personnel arrive or the person becomes responsive. Even if they regain consciousness, they still need medical attention. CPR may cause broken ribs, but it is life-saving.

6

7

## Use an AED if Needed

If the person is in cardiac arrest, use an AED. Dry their chest and move them to a dry area before following the AED steps.

8

## Mandatory Reporting

**Remember:** any incident resulting in death or a serious injury requiring emergency medical assistance must be **Reported to MDH** by the end of the next working day.

# PREVENTION: HOW TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE AROUND WATER

1

## Follow Pool Safety Rules

- Make sure your pool is fully enclosed with a self-closing, self-latching gate at least 4 feet tall (or another secure barrier).
- **Fact:** drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death among children ages 1-4. Ensuring your fence or enclosure is secure helps keep young children, the group most at risk, from accessing the pool unsupervised.
- Keep pool water clear and clean. If you can't see the bottom or the main drain, close the pool until the problem is fixed. Cloudy water makes it hard to spot someone in trouble.

2

## Supervision of Children

Strongly encourage the supervision of children, especially young ones.

3

## Set and Enforce Pool Rules

Add stricter pool rules, such as restricting young or small children from deep areas and requiring adult supervision at all times.

4

## Provide Water Safety Equipment/Lessons

Offer water safety equipment, such as life jackets, for rent at the pool, and consider providing swimming classes for a variety of age groups.

5

## Train Staff to Recognize Drowning & Respond

Ensure that staff can recognize the signs of drowning, and consider having someone trained in CPR near the pool.

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