

DROWNING SYMPTOMS AFTER LEAVING WATER? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

Despite popular belief, drowning is not always synonymous with death, and it is also never "dry". Health experts define drowning as "the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid".¹

This means a person can experience drowning symptoms from being fully beneath the water, or from water entering the airways another way, like from splashing. Either way, this respiratory impairment can be fatal, but most times it is not.



When a person drowns, there are only three possible end results: fatal drowning, nonfatal drowning with injury, and nonfatal drowning without injury.²

WATCH OUTS

The best way to avoid drowning is to practice better overall water safety. If your child was in the water and you notice any of these warning signs afterward, it could mean that water has been aspirated and has compromised the airways or lungs.



Trouble breathing



Chest pain



Acting unusual



Low energy



Extreme sleepiness



Persistent coughing



Irritability

There have been no recorded cases of normal, healthy children who suddenly die because they went swimming days earlier. Symptoms that appear unexpectedly, much later are likely unrelated to the drowning episode and should be evaluated as such.²

ACT FAST



Notice behavior changes up to 4 hours later? Seek medical help.



A chest X-ray may be needed and the child may need oxygen and observation.



In most cases the symptoms improve within hours and the patient is released.

STATISTICS

Drowning is fast, silent, and preventable.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is responsible for more deaths among children ages 1-4 than any other cause of death except birth defects. It is also estimated that for each child who dies from drowning, five more children receive emergency care for nonfatal submersion injuries.³

Nonfatal drownings are not rare. In fact, they happen more often than fatal drownings. So when symptoms show, even minimally, it is worth further medical intervention to avoid injury.²

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2. Hawkins SC, Sempstrott J, Schmidt A. Drowning in a sea of misinformation: dry drowning and secondary drowning. EMN. 2017;39(8):39-40.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS).