

Could you spot and save a person drowning?

June 5 2022



When you're at a beach or pool, would you be able to identify someone who's drowning and take action to save them?

"Even the most experienced swimmers can be in danger if the weather is bad, currents are strong or a [medical emergency](#) occurs in the water," said Dr. Gillian Schmitz, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP). "Most drowning accidents are preventable, but it only takes seconds for a tragedy to occur."

On average, 11 people die in accidental drownings each day in the United States, and drowning is one of the leading causes of death among 1- to 4-year-olds, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It can be difficult to determine whether someone is drowning, so ACEP outlined the signs:

- Bobbing or floating in place.
- Head tilted back with mouth open.
- Head low in the water, with mouth at water level.
- Trying to roll over onto the back.
- Hyperventilating or gasping for breath.
- Hair over forehead or eyes.
- Eyes glassy and empty, unable to focus, or eyes closed.

If someone appears to be in trouble in the water, take immediate action. Get help from a lifeguard or call 911. Do not attempt to rescue a drowning person when you're also in the water unless you are trained to do so. Drowning people may panic and try to pull anyone nearby underwater with them, the ACEP explained.

Instead, extend or throw a floating object to the person. Once they are safely out of the water, tilt their head back, lift their chin and check for breath. Turn the person on their side to help them expel water.

If the person is not breathing, anyone trained should begin to perform

hands-only CPR until [first responders](#) arrive.

"Learning to swim and becoming familiar with water safety are choices that can save a life," Schmitz said in an ACEP news release. "Simple steps to avoid danger can help keep everyone safe."

Keep the following steps in mind:

- Always designate a responsible adult to supervise children in or near water.
- Clear any loose toys from the pool area to reduce tripping hazards.
- Don't use toys as flotation devices. Use life jackets for activities in or near lakes, rivers, or oceans, especially for children and weaker swimmers.
- When swimming in natural bodies of water, be wary of hidden hazards such as strong currents, sharp rocks, or tangles of vegetation.
- Always check the [weather forecast](#) before [water activities](#).
- Use the buddy system when swimming.
- Don't drink alcohol before or during [water](#) activities or while supervising children.
- People with [medical conditions](#) or those taking certain medications may require additional precautions.

More information: For more about water safety, go to the [American Red Cross](#).

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Citation: Could you spot and save a person drowning? (2022, June 5) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-06-person.html>

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