

Hundreds of U.S. kids drown every year—learn how to protect yours

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Drowning is the leading cause of death among children aged 1 to 4 years

old in the United States, and too many older children continue to die in the water, according to a new report from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

A child can slip underwater in the seconds it takes a parent to send a text message. Or while a caregiver turns away to pick up a smartphone.

"The fatalities from drowning and non-fatal drowning injuries are still high, so water safety vigilance remains crucially important this summer and all year," CPSC chair [Alex Hoehn-Saric](#) said in an agency news release.

For children younger than 15, an average of 371 pool- or spa-related fatal drownings occurred each year between 2018 and 2020, according to the annual report. In 2020, that number was 340, down 7% from the previous year.

In 2022, there were 6,400 non-fatal drowning injuries, statistically the same as in 2021.

The [annual report](#) provides information on fatal drownings for 2018 through 2020 and on nonfatal drownings for 2020 through 2022 because of a lag time in fatality statistics.

Pools, [hot tubs](#) and the like contribute to thousands of visits to emergency rooms annually. Through 2022, there were an estimated 6,300 pool- or spa-related hospital emergency department-treated, nonfatal drowning injuries each year. About 76% of these nonfatal drowning injuries involved children younger than age 5.

Fatal drownings in these [young children](#) in [pools](#) and spas increased 10% in 2020, numbering 279, the findings showed.

About 80% of these reported fatal drownings happened in residential settings, such as the [family home](#), a relative's house or a neighboring house. About 91% of those drownings happened in children younger than 5.

"CPSC urges parents and caregivers to follow [Pool Safety safety steps](#). And I especially encourage everyone to use layers of protection," Hoehn-Saric said.

This would include installing proper barriers, covers and alarms on or around your pool while also designating an adult to always supervise children in the water, he said.

The CPSC also found stark racial disparities. In the 63% of drowning fatalities where race was identified, Black children were involved in 21% of all drownings. For [older children](#)—aged 5 to 14—with race identified, 45% of drowning deaths involved Black kids.

This highlights the need to reach these historically excluded communities, the CPSC said.

Here are the CPSC's tips for keeping children safe in and around the water:

- Never leave a child unattended in areas where there is water.
- Always designate an adult "water watcher," who should not be reading, texting, using a phone or getting distracted in any other way. This warning applies to pools, spas, bathtubs, buckets, decorative ponds and fountains.
- Install layers of protection around your pool or spa, including barriers to prevent an unsupervised child from accessing the water. Door alarms, pool covers and self-closing, self-latching devices on fence gates and doors that access pools can work.

- Learn how to perform CPR on children and adults. Learn how to swim and teach your child how to swim.
- Keep [children](#) away from pool drains, pipes and other openings to avoid entrapments.
- Make sure the pool or spa you use has drain covers that comply with federal safety standards. Ask your pool service provider about these.

More information: The American Red Cross has more on [home pool and hot tub safety](#).

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