

# Physician warns that drowning doesn't usually look like what people expect

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Just like last summer, there are reports this year of a lifeguard shortage around the nation, meaning many public swimming pools and beaches may be closed or their hours limited. Without trained lifeguards on duty,

water safety becomes an issue, especially for children.

Dr. Michael Boniface, a Mayo Clinic emergency medicine physician, says drowning happens quickly and quietly so make sure [children](#) are always supervised by an attentive adult. A sunny day at the beach or pool can take a dark turn in seconds.

"Drowning in this country remains one of the leading causes of accidental death in children and affects adults, as well," says Dr. Boniface.

On average, more than 10 people die from drowning each day, most of them children. But he says drowning doesn't usually look how people expect it to look. There isn't the splashing and screaming you see in movies.

"In most cases, you don't see a struggle," he says. "You just see somebody under the water or floating face down."

But in some cases, there is a window of a few seconds where you might notice some signs. A drowning person won't wave their arms because their arms instinctively push down to try to get them above water.

And a drowning person is unable to make any sound, so if a child is noticeably quiet, that's a red flag.

Dr. Boniface says the most important thing you can do is take steps to prevent a drowning. That means limiting alcohol, fencing off a pool and keeping an eye on kids in the water.

"This involves close, constant adult supervision, somebody watching the water at all times," he says.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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