

Drowning Prevention Resource Guide



Why Are We Worried About Drowning?

Approximately **10 people a day** die from unintentional drowning.

Drowning can happen to anyone, even experienced swimmers.

Individuals ages 15-44 made up nearly half of all unintentional fatal drownings in Massachusetts. (MA DPH)

Most drownings occur in natural bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, ponds, oceans, and other natural bodies of water. (MA DPH)

From 2019 to 2020, **drowning death rates increased** for people **29 and younger**. The largest increases in unintentional drowning deaths occurred among **young adults aged 20 to 24 years, Black or African American persons, and males**.

Systemic racism and disinvestment in low-income communities have contributed to stark disparities in swimming ability. When parents have no/low swimming skills, their children are unlikely to have proficient swimming skills.

What Can You Do to Help Prevent Drowning?



Know the **Chain of Drowning Survival** to help provide the greatest chance of survival to someone who is drowning



Learn the **5 Layers of Protection** to help protect children who are most at risk



Check out the **American Red Cross** water safety resources for **kids** and **parents/caregivers**.



If you are a residential pool & spa professional, commercial aquatics professional, or a pediatrician, you can help support your patrons and patients by becoming a **Water Safety Champion**



Check out the **U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan** and see how you can advocate for greater water safety protections in your community

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8 Tips to Stay Safe in the Water

1

Learn how to swim. Swimming lessons can make us all safer in and around water. One month of formal lessons can reduce the possibility of childhood drownings by almost 90% (USA Swimming Foundation).

- As part of the [Swim Safe Boston](#) initiative, nine YMCAs across Boston and the Umana Boston Public School in East Boston are offering [free swim lessons](#) to children and adults
- Visit [Boston Centers for Youth and Families \(BCYF\)](#) to find your closest city pool and learn more about year-round registration for indoor pools and seasonal registration for outdoor pools.

2

Wear a life jacket if you cannot swim or are a weak swimmer, and make sure to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Do not use water toys, noodles, or floaties as life savers. When boating, everyone should wear a life jacket, regardless of swimming ability.

3

Only swim in designated areas and read all posted safety signs. If possible, only swim when a lifeguard is present. Know where the lifeguard is at all times and stay within their sight line in case of emergency.

4

Stay alert. Have at least one person in your group responsible for supervision as a “[Water Watcher](#)”. Being a water watcher means avoiding any distractions, even for a moment. If with a group, have people take turns.

5

Never dive into water less than 10 feet deep. The safest way to enter water is always feet first.

6

Prevent [shallow water blackout](#) by never prolonging a breath or ignoring the urge to breath, rest after strenuous activities before swimming, and never play breath-holding games in the water.

7

When swimming in open bodies of water (lakes, rivers, oceans) avoid swimming in an area with strong moving currents, underwater debris, and water temperatures that could be dangerous.

- Be aware of [unseen hazards](#) such as steep drop-offs or invisible currents. Poor visibility in the water can make it harder for you to see where you are and for others to see you.

8

Never swim alone. Swim with a buddy and never alone, even if you're a strong swimmer.

