

# Drowning Prevention Resource Guide



## Why Are We Worried About Drowning?

Approximately **10 people per 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, and oceans (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 less likely 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



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



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



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** to 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, YMCAs and other community organizations across Boston offer [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 you are 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 breathe. 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.