

# Secondary Drowning – Dry Drowning: Know the Risks

Many parents are unaware that their child could become seriously ill and die at home after playing in the water. Dry drowning and secondary drowning can occur immediately and 1 – 24 hours after water play is over.

With dry drowning, a child's vocal cords start to spasm and close. This shuts off the airway, and the child has difficulty breathing. It can happen in the water, on a high dive or on a high-speed water slide. While dry drowning usually happens immediately, it can occur after the child has left the water.

Secondary drowning happens when water gets into your child's lungs. This causes a condition called pulmonary edema which makes breathing difficult. Secondary drowning can occur 1 – 24 hours after being in the water.

Know the symptoms and warning signs of dry drowning and secondary drowning if your child has been in or near the water. Your child may have:

- A cough.
- Trouble breathing.
- Chest pain.
- Sleepiness – feels very tired.
- Behavior changes – feeling cranky, irritable.
- Vomiting.

If your child displays any of these symptoms, you should **seek medical attention immediately**. Go to the emergency room.

Parents can help prevent drowning incidents.

- **Watch your child at all times when around water.** Focus your attention on your child.
- Never let your child swim alone.
- Teach your child basic swimming skills. Enroll her in swimming classes.
- Discuss water safety. Never dive in shallow water. Swim only in areas patrolled by lifeguards. Emphasize the risks of drugs, alcohol and water play.
- Do not allow water games that allow “dunking” the head under water.
- Always wear life jackets while boating.
- Learn CPR.

Studies show that many parents think kids are safe from drowning in pools. This is not true. Even though a child has swimming skills, *they may not be enough to prevent drowning.* Do not let that give you a false sense of security.

Every year around 1000 children die from unintentional drowning. About 5000 kids require treatment in an emergency room for non-fatal, water related injuries. Make water play **safe**. Watch your kids while in or near water and for 24 hours after water play ends.

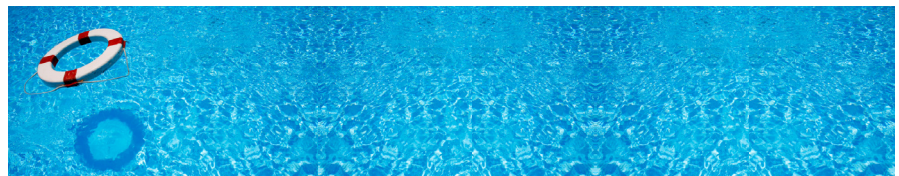
---

## To learn more, log on to:

<http://www.parents.com/kids/safety/outdoor/dry-drowning/>

<http://www.webmd.com/children/features/secondary-drowning-dry-drowning#1>

Search for *Dry Drowning or Secondary Drowning* on your favorite search engine.



*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital  
to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



**Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.**

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889  
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week  
[www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org)

Revised 2017

