



Chapter 7. Part 2. Drowning and Water-Related Incidents

Chapter 7: Environmental and Situational Emergencies

Part 2: Drowning and Water-Related Incidents

(Learn how to rescue, resuscitate, and provide first aid to near-drowning victims safely and effectively.)

1. What is Drowning?

Drowning is the process of experiencing **respiratory impairment from submersion or immersion in liquid**. It may result in:

- **Fatal drowning** - leads to death
- **Non-fatal drowning** - survival with or without complications

Drowning can occur in as little as **30 seconds**, even in shallow water, and in **silence**, especially among children.

2. Stages of Drowning

1. **Struggling to breathe** → panic → water enters mouth
 2. **Laryngospasm** (throat reflex) may temporarily block water from lungs
 3. **Water enters lungs** → gas exchange fails → hypoxia (low oxygen)
 4. **Loss of consciousness**
 5. **Cardiac arrest and brain injury** within 3-5 minutes if not rescued
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3. Water Rescue Techniques

Your safety comes first. Never attempt a water rescue beyond your training.

A. Rescue Approach (If Trained):

1. **Reach** - use a pole, stick, or towel
2. **Throw** - life buoy, rope, or bottle
3. **Row** - use a boat if available
4. **Go** - swim to rescue *only* if trained and it is safe

Avoid direct contact with a panicked victim—use a **floatation device** to avoid being pulled under.



4. First Aid for Near-Drowning

Once the victim is **out of the water**, immediate care is crucial.

A. If Unresponsive & Not Breathing:

1. **Call emergency services (112)** immediately
2. **Start CPR immediately:**
 - Give **5 initial rescue breaths**
 - Then begin **30 chest compressions + 2 rescue breaths**
 - Continue until breathing resumes or help arrives
3. **Use an AED** if available and trained, as drowning can lead to cardiac arrest

B. If Unresponsive but Breathing:

- Place in **recovery position** (on side, head slightly tilted)
- Keep warm with a towel or blanket
- Monitor breathing and pulse continuously
- Be prepared for vomiting due to water in the stomach

C. If Conscious but Symptomatic:

- Remove wet clothing and wrap in warm, dry covering
- Keep the person calm and still
- Watch for signs of **secondary drowning** (see below)
- Do **not** allow them to leave without **medical evaluation**

5. Secondary Drowning / Delayed Complications

In some cases, **fluid remains in the lungs** even after apparent recovery, causing symptoms **hours later**:

❖ Warning Signs (Within 1-24 hours):

- Persistent coughing
- Trouble breathing or wheezing
- Fatigue or confusion
- Bluish lips or skin

These require **immediate hospital care**—don't delay.

6. Important Dos & Don'ts

□ Do

Start CPR ASAP if not breathing
Keep victim warm and reassured
Use a flotation device during water rescue
Monitor for secondary drowning after resuscitation

□ Don't

Waste time trying to pump water out of lungs
Leave a recovered person without observation
Jump in without assessing your own safety
Assume recovery is complete once breathing resumes



7. Self-Check Questions

1. What is the first step before attempting a water rescue?
2. How many initial rescue breaths are given to a drowning victim before chest compressions?
3. What is the recovery position and when should it be used?
4. What are two symptoms of delayed (secondary) drowning?
5. Why shouldn't you attempt to force water out of the lungs?

ANSWERS:

1. Ensure your safety—use reach/throw before entering water
2. Five
3. Side-lying with head tilted—used when victim is breathing but unconscious
4. Coughing, trouble breathing, bluish lips, confusion
5. It wastes time and CPR is more effective for oxygen delivery

□ Key Take-Home Points

- Drowning can happen quickly and silently—**early recognition saves lives.**
- **Call for help and begin CPR immediately** if the person is not breathing.
- Be alert for **secondary drowning** symptoms hours after the incident.
- Prioritize your **own safety**—never perform a risky rescue beyond your training.
- Every near-drowning victim should be **evaluated by medical professionals.**