

Drowning isn't like the movies. People often cannot call for help, wave their arms, or splash water.

Many injuries happen in predictable, preventable ways.

Everyone wears a life jacket – no matter how old, how well they swim, or how long the boat trip.

Teenage and Adult Drowning

- Every year, more than 60 Oklahomans aged 15 and older drown.
- More than three-fourths of drownings occur outdoors in natural bodies of water, including lakes, rivers, creeks, and ponds.
- Nine out of ten people who drown are not wearing a life jacket.
- Nearly half of all teenage and adult drownings involve alcohol use.

Prevention

- Keep a phone nearby in case of emergency.
- Learn to swim well. Do not overestimate your swimming ability or strength.
- Learn CPR. Early intervention can improve outcomes.
- No matter how old you are, always swim with a buddy.
- Do not drink alcohol or take mind-altering drugs before or while swimming, boating, skiing, getting in a hot tub, or bathing.

Open Water and Boating

- Swimming in open water is not the same as in a pool. Always enter the water feet first.
- Be aware of uneven surfaces, currents, undertow, and weather.
- Everyone should wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket – no matter how old or how well they swim. Swimming noodles, water wings, or inner tubes are not safety devices. They should not be used in place of a life jacket.
- Take a boating safety course.

Canals, Drains, and Ditches

- Teach older children not to play, bike, or swim near canals or ditches.
- Do not drive or walk through moving flood waters, no matter how large your vehicle.
- It takes only six inches of moving water to knock over an adult, and only two feet to carry away most vehicles (including SUVs and pickups).

What does drowning look like?

- People who are drowning often can't call for help. Their mouth is only above water long enough to breathe in and out.
- They can't wave their arms for help. The natural motion of the arms while drowning is out and down to propel the body above the water to breathe.
- Glassy eyes and unfocused gaze.
- Tilted head with the mouth open or head in water and mouth at water level.
- Closed eyes or hair over eyes.
- Not using the legs to kick.
- Gasping for air or hyperventilating.
- If you are not sure – ask them if they are alright. If they don't answer, you may have only a few seconds to get to them.

Internet Resources

- <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/>
- <http://www.uscgboating.org/>

Live Injury-Free!