Disparities in U.S. Childhood and Adolescent Drowning Deaths

Numbers

Every year in the U.S., approximately 3,700 people die from unintentional drowning. Nearly 900 of them are children and adolescents ages 0 to 19.[1]

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for children ages 1-4. For children and adolescents ages 5-19, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury deaths.

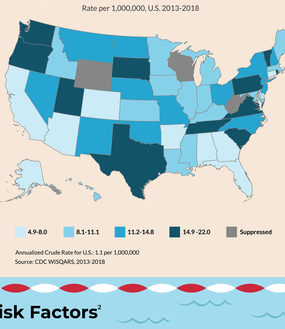
Who

Drowning is responsible for more than 1 in 10 unintentional injury deaths in children and adolescents.[1]

Overall boys are at higher risk for drowning, with more than twice the death rate of girls (6 per 1,000,000 for girls versus 15.6 for boys).[1]

Rates of drowning deaths are higher for Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) children and adolescents than their White, Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic counterparts.[1]

Rates of Drowning Deaths by Race/Ethnicity



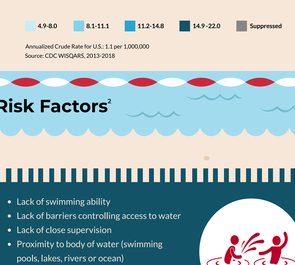
Source: CDC WISQARS, 2015-2018

Where

Children and adolescents in the South generally have higher rates of drowning deaths compared to those in other U.S. regions.[1]

Drowning Rates by State among Children and Adolescents Ages 0-19

Rate per 1,000,000, U.S. 2013-2018



Annualized Crude Rate for U.S.: 1.1 per 1,000,000
Source: CDC WISQARS, 2013-2018

Risk Factors[2]

- Lack of swimming ability
- Lack of barriers controlling access to water
- Lack of close supervision
- Proximity to body of water (swimming pools, lakes, rivers or ocean)
- Failure to wear life jackets
- Use of alcohol
- Seizure disorders

Solutions

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that drowning prevention should be a multilayered approach.[3] Key recommendations are:

1. Babies can drown in as little as an inch of water.[4] Remove water from tubs, buckets, and kiddie pools after use and store them upside down.[5]
2. Pools should have a 4 ft high, 4-sided fence with self-closing, self-latching gates.[6]
3. Children and adolescents should learn basic swim skills, including floating and moving through the water.[2] Every child is different - enroll your child in lessons when they are ready.[6]
4. Supervise children and teens when in and around water - supervision must be close, constant, and attentive.[6]

Sources

1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). CDC WISQARS 2015-2018. Retrieved June 16, 2020 from https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html
2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Unintentional Drowning: Get the Facts. Retrieved September 18, 2020 from https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html
3) American Academy of Pediatrics. (2019). Prevention of Drowning. Retrieved September 18, 2020 from https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/5/e20190850
4) Safe Kids Worldwide. (2020). Water Safety for Babies. Retrieved September 18, 2020 from https://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field_age/babies-0%E2%80%9312-months/field_risks/water-and-drowning
5) Safe Kids Worldwide. (2020). Water Safety for Home. Retrieved September 18, 2020 from https://www.safekids.org/watersafety
6) American Academy of Pediatrics. (2019). Water Safety for Teens. Retrieved September 18, 2020 from https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Water-Safety-for-Older-Children.aspx

EDC Education Development Center

CSN