



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

For Immediate Release

Non-fatal drowning disproportionately affects children in Ontario

Learn to protect your family during National Drowning Prevention Week

Toronto, ON – July 21, 2024: For every drowning death in Ontario, there are nearly four non-fatal drownings serious enough to require an emergency department visit and children aged 0–19 are at the highest risk. During the years 2012–2021, 2,541 children attended an emergency department and 503 were hospitalized due to non-fatal drowning.

To protect our children, the Lifesaving Society is calling on families to prevent tragedy by becoming Water Smart®. The Society's annual [National Drowning Prevention Week](#) (NDPW) runs from July 21 to 27. This year's campaign focuses on educating Ontarians about the common risk factors for non-fatal drownings and provides simple, actionable steps to keep kids safe.

What is a non-fatal drowning?

Non-fatal drowning happens when a person survives a drowning incident. It is a serious but preventable cause of injury that can lead to lifelong disability.

Stephanie Bakalar, Corporate Communications Manager for Lifesaving Society Ontario, wants parents to understand what non-fatal drowning looks like so they can act accordingly:

“At its mildest level you might see your child coughing. As the impairment becomes more severe, your child may have sustained difficulty breathing and be disoriented or confused. In the most severe form of non-fatal drowning, your child could be unconscious or non-breathing and require resuscitation.”

“Parents should react to non-fatal drowning right away, as even mild cases can cause future issues,” stresses Bakalar. “Anyone who experiences involuntary, distressed coughing, or difficulty breathing as a result of a non-fatal drowning should be seen by a physician.”

The facts on non-fatal drowning in Ontario

The [Ontario Non-Fatal Drowning Report, 2023](#) shows that non-fatal drowning impacts children at higher rates than any other age group. Non-fatal drowning incidents among children most commonly occurred in pools followed by during boating.

Keeping kids safe

“Drowning prevention doesn't have to be complicated, but it does require parents to educate themselves,” says Bakalar, who recommends parents visit [watersmartparents.ca](#) to learn how to keep their kids safe in any season, during any activity and in any location.

“It's simple steps like wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, actively supervising your children and staying within arms' reach at all times that will make a big difference.”

The Lifesaving Society also recommends:

- Learning to swim: both children and adults should take swimming lessons.
- Swimming in lifeguard-supervised settings, where 1% of drowning deaths occur.
- Ensuring you can meet the Swim to Survive® standard (roll into deep water, tread water for 1 minute, swim 50 metres).
- Wearing lifejackets while boating – everyone, regardless of age or swimming ability.
- Taking Lifesaving Society courses like Bronze Medallion and First Aid to learn how to help yourself and others.

About the Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society is a full-service provider of programs, products and services designed to prevent drowning. We save lives and prevent water-related injury through our training programs, Water Smart public education, drowning research, aquatic safety management and lifesaving sport. The Lifesaving Society is a leader and partner in the delivery of water safety education throughout Canada and around the world.

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