



衛生署

Department of Health



衛生防護中心

Centre for Health Protection

# Understanding Water Risks

## Prevent Drowning Accidents

Even a bucket of water can cause drowning. With the right knowledge and safety precautions, accidents can be prevented.

In 2019, the Department of Health released the Hong Kong Drowning Report, which analyses the cases of deaths due to unintentional drowning registered in the Coroner's Court from 2012 to 2016. This report aims to understand the demographic characteristics and the risk factors of these cases, including the locations where these drowning incidents occurred and the activities leading up to them, and also provides recommendations.

### Drowning Locations and Related Activities

From 2012 to 2016, there were 193 deaths from unintentional drowning. In addition to the expected water activities, domestic settings and domestic activities are listed among the top five most common locations where drowning occurs and activities prior to drowning. It is therefore crucial to raise awareness of the drowning risks at homes.

#### Top 5 Most Common Drowning Locations and Activities Prior to Drowning

Drowning Locations		Activities Prior to Drowning	
Offshore waters		Swimming	
Beaches		Accidental immersion	
Private swimming pools		Domestic activities	
Domestic settings		Underwater activities	
Public swimming pools		Water-based fishing	

### Risky Behaviours

From the report, we know more about the risk factors leading to drowning. Most drowning cases result from various complicated reasons, but the following risky behaviours were repeatedly reported.



Engaging in water activities alone



Alcohol detected in the body



Drugs detected in the body



Engaging in water activities under adverse weather conditions



Swimming in the absence of a lifeguard

### Drowning Prevention Recommendations

It only takes a few minutes for a person to go into cardiac arrest from submersion once drowned. To ensure safety and avoid drowning, the following measures should be taken:

General Public

**Improve Water Safety Knowledge and Skills**

Learn how to swim

Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for drowning victims which is different to that for other cases of cardiac arrest.

**Prevent Domestic Drowning**

Domestic drowning hazards can be subtle, even a bucket of water can cause drowning. Be aware of potential risks.

Be alert, if any member of the family is prone to falling or fainting, it can result in drowning.

Supervise children & take extra care for elderly persons and family members who need special care.

People engaging in Water Activities

**Be Prepared**

Know your own ability, acquire the skills required for engaging in the water activities and equip yourself with suitable protective gear.

Consult a doctor regarding your own fitness for engaging in the water activities if you have a medical condition.

Avoid consuming alcohol.

Do not take illicit drugs.

Be accompanied.

**Know the Environment**

Avoid water activities during adverse weather conditions.

Know the facilities, surroundings and risks involved in the water activities.

**Take care of Companions**

Supervise children and accompany elderly persons.

Perform water activities in the presence of a lifeguard.

Check weather information while planning for water activities or hiking that passes by a river or a stream.

**25th July**  
is World Drowning Prevention Day.

**Anyone can drown,**  
but over 90% of drowning cases occur in low- and middle-income countries.

**DROWNING MORTALITY < 1.5 PER 100,000**

**DROWNING MORTALITY 1.5-3.0 PER 100,000**

**DROWNING MORTALITY > 3.0 PER 100,000**

● Data not available ● Not applicable

World Health Organization

### World Drowning Prevention Day

According to the World Health Organization, over 230,000 people died from drowning around the world every year, which is 26 people per hour! Some of them drowned due to calamities, fishing, or gathering food, whereas some drowned while playing in river water, in home swimming pools, or even when showering. Many of them were children. Drowning is preventable. In 2021, the World Health Organization set 25th July as the World Drowning Prevention Day to raise awareness of the impact of drowning on families and communities, as well as to provide drowning prevention recommendations.

For more local information about drowning, please visit the following website: