



# Rural Water Safety



Water is an integral part of the rural landscape used in recreation, agriculture, and sustaining life. However, water attracts young children and each time youth come in contact with water, drowning is possible.

Children's  
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## What are the injury facts for rural youth drowning?

Drowning is the second-leading cause of unintentional injury death among children ages 1-14. It is estimated that for each childhood drowning death, approximately four children are hospitalized for near-drowning.

Drowning rates for all age groups are three times higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. Childhood drowning in rural areas often occurs in non-pool settings, such as lakes, ponds and irrigation canals.

Drowning in canals, pits, ponds etc. is the second-leading cause of childhood agricultural-related deaths.

## What factors are key to prevent rural youth drowning?

- Responsible adult supervision
- Abstention from alcohol and other drug use
- Use of personal flotation device (PFD)
- Provision of rescue equipment near bodies of water
- Learn to swim
- Learn basic rescue techniques
- Recognize that youth can drown in less than two inches of water (e.g. buckets, stock tanks, etc.)

## What developmental factors must youth possess to participate in water-related activities?

- Ability to swim and float
- Ability to anticipate, recognize, and react to hazards
- Good judgment to stay in appropriate water depth for ability

*Note: Children with special health care needs should be evaluated by appropriate medical personnel to determine if therapeutic swimming is a suitable and appropriate activity*

## What strategies promote safe youth participation in water-related activities?

- Providing safe, supervised swimming areas and water activities
- Using self-closing, self-latching barriers (e.g. fencing) on all bodies of water when possible
- Increasing access, availability, and utilization of PFD.
- Recognizing that swimming instruction for young children helps but doesn't prevent drowning
- Restricting unsupervised access of young children to water
- Check depth and temperature of water before entering

## What role do child safety advocates play promoting rural water safety?

- Promote safe activity based on current practices and risk of injury
- Evaluate ongoing prevention and practices
- Monitor childhood injury reports/data
- Inform parents about water safety and supervising children
- Be responsible and a good role model
- Promote swim lessons and educate children about water safety
- Advocate for safe water recreation policy and practice

## Where can I go to learn more about rural water safety?

Additional information and links on drowning prevention in rural areas for youth can be found on the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety Web site <http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children/Resources/Drowning/drowning.htm>. Information available includes a comprehensive listing of resources, a list of other organizations working on drowning prevention, developmental guidelines for youth drowning prevention, and a fact sheet. For technical assistance on youth drowning prevention call 1-800-662-6900.

The National Children's Center strives to enhance the health and safety of all children involved in agricultural work and living in rural settings. The center is a program of the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation.



National **Children's** Center  
for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

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<http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children/>

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