



Getting to know "Silent Drowning"

Do you know what silent drowning is? It's a grim subject – but it's so important to be able to spot the signs and take the necessary precautions to prevent it.

The term silent drowning implies that, perhaps, there's another kind of drowning – a noisy kind. We're here to tell you that there isn't. Drowning is usually silent, very unlike the way it can be portrayed in movies. When you're at the lake, you won't be alerted by a drowning victim's yelling and flailing arms. That's why you need to keep a watchful eye on friends and family, especially young children.

The Canadian Red Cross has identified these warning signs to watch for while supervising swimmers:

- 1) Silence.** A drowning victim will put all their energy into trying to breathe and stay above water. They don't have the capacity to yell for help, and they won't be able to respond to the question "Are you okay?"
- 2) Head position.** The head will be tilted back and low in the water, and the mouth at water level.
- 3) Arm position.** The arms will be extended to the side, pressing down for support.
- 4) Body position.** The body will be nearly vertical in the water column.
- 5) Direction.** Often, the drowning victim will be facing the nearest point of safety such as a person, a boat, or land.

There is no shortage of statistics related to drowning and drowning risk factors. But here's another alarming statistic: according to the Canadian Red Cross, 48% of parents believe they can effectively supervise children in the water by listening for signs of problems. Instead, parents and caregivers should always designate one person who is responsible for supervising children in, on or around water. That person should never take their eyes off the children. That means not being distracted by smartphones, tablets, or books.

Drowning is preventable. A few safety precautions are highly effective against it. Whether you're enjoying the beach or you're on the water this summer, take the precautions: wear a lifejacket or Personal Flotation Device when you're boating, floating and paddling; supervise children and watch – don't listen – for their safety; swim with a friend; and never boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Make every outing to the water a return outing.