

# Bystanders Who Intervene Can Reduce the Risks of a Drowning Child's Death or Severe Disability by 80%: Study Abstract

*A drowning victim was more likely to recover when submerged under water for less than 5 minutes and when rescued by a bystander, according to research presented at the 2021 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition*

The retrospective study in Harris County, Texas, "Bystander Resuscitation in Pediatric Drowning," examined EMS, hospital and fatality data from 2010-2012 in 264 pediatric drowning victims.

Drowning is a leading cause of unintentional injury death in children ages 1 through 14 years old.

"Bystanders play a critical role in preventing poor outcomes in childhood drowning by instituting safe, early and effective rescue and resuscitation of pediatric drowning victims," said abstract author Rohit P. Shenoi, MD, pediatrics professor at Baylor College of Medicine and Attending Physician, Emergency Center, Texas Children's Hospital. "Early rescue can lead to good outcomes in victims of drowning."

Children who were submerged under water less than five minutes were significantly less likely to experience severe disability or death, according to the research.

Researchers also found that, regardless of whether cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) was performed, a child's odds of not suffering an unfavorable outcome were 80% higher when a bystander intervened. Many bystanders rescue drowning victims by virtue of their proximity to the victim, according to the research. They tend to interrupt the drowning process at the respiratory arrest stage before full cardiopulmonary arrest has occurred.

"Bystander" was defined as a parent, relative, babysitter, lifeguard, friend or other person who was present at the site.

The study included all pediatric drowning victims - those who sustained respiratory arrest and those who sustained cardiac arrest. Most were between ages 1 and 4, and most drowning incidents occurred at a swimming pool.

"The drowning chain of survival is key to reducing drowning deaths and injury," Dr. Shenoi said. "The steps of the chain are to prevent drowning, recognize distress, provide flotation, remove from water, and provide care and CPR as needed."

Co-author Colleen Driscoll, a 4th year medical student at Baylor College of Medicine, will present the study abstract at 11:15 am CT Sunday, Oct. 10, 2021.

To request an interview, journalists may contact Homa Shalchi Communications Specialist, Baylor College of Medicine

**Please note only the abstract is being presented at the meeting. In some cases, the researcher may have more data available to share with media or may be preparing a longer article for submission to a journal.**

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).*