Drowning is defined as death by suffocation due to being immersed in water. There are two classifications of drowning: wet and dry. In wet drowning, the person has inhaled water which interferes with respiration and causes the circulatory system to collapse. In the less common instance of dry drowning, the airway closes up due to spasms caused by the presence of water. Near drowning may result in neurological damage and successful recovery depends on prompt rescue and resuscitation.

**Interventions to reduce the risk of drowning**

In many instances, drowning can be prevented. Several of these preventative measures include:

- Check the water depth before entering. Never dive head first into water of unknown depth.
- Teaching children and adults to swim along with education regarding the risks of swimming in particular conditions.
- Refraining from swimming beyond skill level or in uncertain conditions.
- No running or playing in slippery areas near bodies of water to minimize the risk of accidental injury and falling into water.
- Constant uninterrupted adult supervision of children around all forms of water including open bodies of water and buckets, etc.
- Never swimming alone or in unsupervised places. Teach children to always swim with a friend.
- Lifeguards on duty at public swimming areas.
- Inflatable life jackets for children and adults with low swimming skills, when bathing or swimming in open waters.
- Refraining from alcohol consumption before and while swimming.
- Ensuring that suction outlets in pools, hot tubs and spas are safely constructed and maintained at a safe level.
- Ensuring the presence of isolation fences and locked doors around pools or reservoirs of water.
- Adequate rescue aids on boats and ships, training of crew in rescue procedures, and clear information given to passengers with practicing of emergency drills.
- Learning basic first aid and, if possible, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) techniques. This is particularly important for pool owners and individuals who regularly participate in water recreation.

**Main causes of drowning**

The main causes of drowning can include:

- For children, a lapse in adult supervision is the single most important contributory cause for drowning. Children can drown not only in pools, lakes and the sea, but also in other bodies of water such as bathtubs, buckets of water, etc. Children with some swimming skills can get into trouble if they attempt activity beyond their capabilities, or if they are injured due to unsafe behavior in the water.
- Alcohol consumption prior to swimming or falling into water is a common contributory factor in drowning for children and adolescents in many countries.
- The non-use of life jackets has been linked to drowning accidents related to yacht, boat and canoe use.
- In open waters, people can drown if their swimming skills are insufficient to deal with adverse situations, such as large waves, outgoing tides and offshore winds.
- In swimming pools, hot tubs, spas and other such enclosed recreational areas, a variety of scenarios can come into play.
- Strong suction at inlets and outlets of pools can entrap body parts or hair and hold the victim's head under water, causing drowning.
- The clarity of the water in swimming areas can also be a factor. In turbid water, the lifeguard may not be able to identify someone in need of help. Overcrowded swimming areas present a similar problem.

**For more information, please visit:**

- World Health Organization,
- World Health Organization, Water Sanitation Health, Water-related Diseases,

**Typhoon Yolanda Health Cluster Contacts**

**National- Manila:** haiyanhccmanila@wpro.who.int

**Sub-national- Tacloban:** haitaynhtctacloban@wpro.who.int; hcctacloban@gmail.com

**Sub-national- Cebu:** haitaynhtccebu@wpro.who.int

**Health Cluster Website:** [http://www.wpro.who.int/philippines/typhoon_haiyan/en/](http://www.wpro.who.int/philippines/typhoon_haiyan/en/)