

CDOP HOT TOPIC: DROWNING

JUNE 2024

Last year the NCMD published a [report](#) on traumatic deaths between 2019-2022 (see infographic on next page). As part of the report, the number of drownings were reviewed. There was an increase in the number of deaths by drowning over the 3 years, from 20 in 2019/20 to 37 in 2021/22. Drowning deaths occurred all year, however 53% of them occurred over the summer months.

Drownings that occurred inland (river/lakes) were most common, followed by drownings in the bath. In contrast, swimming pool drownings have decreased. Of the 12 children that died in a swimming pool, 8 of them were on holiday abroad. In over half of the deaths reviewed, the children were thought to be able to swim (although whether they can swim is subjective). Of the 7 infants who died in a bath, 5 of them were using a bath seat at the time of death. **Bath seats can give a false sense of security (CAPT). They are NOT a safety device.** It is essential that children are not left unsupervised at any time whilst using a bath seat and that they always remain in arm's reach. The most common reasons for leaving a child unsupervised included taking a phone call or leaving the room to get something (e.g. a towel), miscommunication between adults as to who was supervising or attending to another child.

The main CDOP learning and recommendations were:

- The importance of supervision of children.
- The need for warning signs and lifesaving equipment around water.
- The importance of water safety in the home and public places.

Drowning is highly preventable.

- Increase awareness and dissemination of water safety within the home, especially during the warmer summer months. This should include the dangers of baths, hot tubs, paddling pools, swimming pools etc. [RLSS water safety at home](#). [RoSPA safety at bath time](#). [NHS bathing your baby](#).
- There needs to be a consistent approach to accident prevention across community, primary and acute care settings. [CAPT guide on preventing unintentional injuries](#).
- Supervision of children at all times when in, on or around water is vital. [RLSS advice](#) on how to support families with water safety (including resources). [CAPT](#) drowning advice and [factsheet](#).
- The [Float to Live campaign](#) has been recognised as a good example reducing the risk of panic in open water.
- The importance of continuing to educate parents, children and young people around water safety more generally: reacting in water, the risks of cold-water shock and the effects of alcohol and substance use and the impact that they can have while in the water.
- The [StayWise portal](#) is a free online library of educational resources to help keep children safe.

There were 84 deaths by drowning 2019-2022. Deaths by drowning has increased over the 3 years.

Over half of the deaths occurred during the summer months.



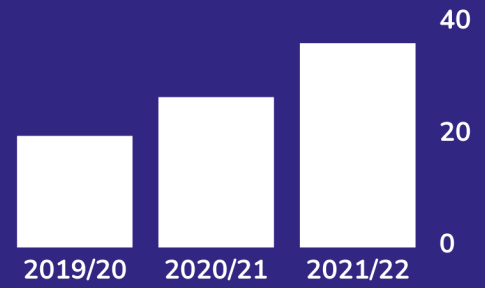
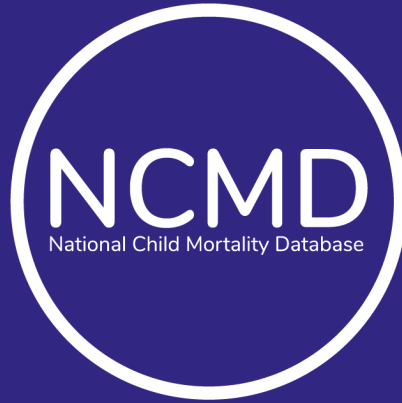
Death rates were highest in children under 5 (45%) and between 15-17 years (31%), in males (3 times higher), children living in deprived areas and children from a black ethnic background.

83% of the children that drowned were not being supervised by an adult.

Supervision is needed at all times. Babies should always be within an arm's reach.

84

There were 84 child deaths due to drowning between April 2019 and March 2022



Drowning deaths increased over the 3 year period

3.5x

The risk of drowning was 3.5x higher for children of Black ethnicity than White

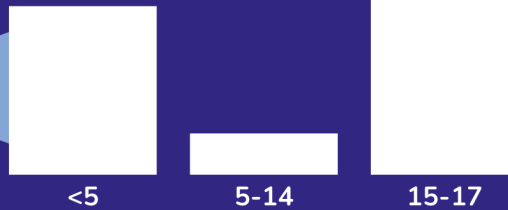
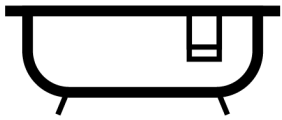
2x

The risk of drowning was 2x higher for children from more deprived areas than from less deprived

3x

3x as many boys drowned as girls

The most common place of drowning for under 5s was in the bath

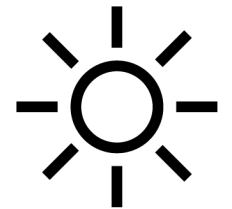


The children most at risk were those aged under 5 and between 15-17 years

The most common place of drowning for 15-17 year olds was inland water

53%

53% of the 8-17 year olds whose deaths were reviewed were thought to be able to swim



54% of all drownings were between June and August; the number between March and May increased during the period

83%

83% of all drownings reviewed occurred when the child was not supervised by an adult



Drownings of this type increased during the period

Recommendations

Make safe bathing techniques a public health focus

Address inequalities in access to swimming and water safety tuition

Invest in water safety education programmes for children and young people

Disseminate water safety advice earlier in the year, starting in Spring