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Childhood drowning prevention and family medicine

Abstract

Introduction: Drowning is the fourth leading cause of death in children aged 1–14 years, despite being almost all preventable. Family doctors (FDs) play a crucial role in prevention and health education. This review aims to highlight the FDs approach to childhood drowning prevention.

Methods: A review was conducted, considering relevant articles, reports, and guidelines on childhood drowning prevention.

Results and discussion: Young children are at higher risk of drowning due to their limited ability to assess danger and lack of water safety skills, particularly when unsupervised near water. In older children and adolescents, risk factors such as peer pressure, risk-taking behaviors and substance use further increase drowning risk. Effective prevention strategies include installing barriers near water sources, swimming and water safety training, resuscitation education, active adult supervision, increasing caregiver awareness, using safety equipment, and avoiding alcohol and drugs. When implemented together, these measures significantly reduce drowning risk. Anticipatory guidance is a key component of FDs intervention. Screening for swimming ability and providing information on community resources can enhance prevention efforts. There is limited research directly linking FDs interventions to childhood drowning prevention, suggesting an opportunity for further study in this area.

Conclusion: Childhood drowning remains a major yet often overlooked cause of preventable death. FDs are in a privileged position to incorporate anticipatory guidance, risk assessment and interventions on drowning prevention into their care.

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