

# Drowning

Drowning is the process of being unable to breathe usually as a result of liquid entering the lungs. The outcome from drowning is classified as either fatal or nonfatal drowning. Other terms such as near-drowning, dry drowning, passive/silent drowning, and secondary drowning have previously been used to describe incidents and are inaccurate - they do not alter the initial management.

## Fatal Drowning

### Signs and Symptoms

- Pale cool skin
- Absent, rapid or laboured breathing
- Decreased level of consciousness
- Coughing
- Cyanosis (blue lips)
- Rapid, weak, slow or absent pulse

### Treatments

- DRSABCD
- Give rescue breaths when safe to do so
- Commence immediate CPR if necessary
- Defibrillate if necessary or available
- If person recovers, place in the recovery position
- Suspect and manage spinal injuries if in shallow water
- Treat Hypothermia (Low Body Temperature) if cold.

## Non-Fatal Drowning

In minor incidents, removal from the water is often followed by coughing and the return of normal breathing. Although the incidence of post-drowning complications resulting in death is rare, these

people still require health professional assessment, discharge advice, and in some cases, observation before they can be released.

If the person has required treatment, even if they appear fully recovered, send for an ambulance.

### Secondary drowning symptoms

- Irregular breathing
- Trouble catching one's breath
- Feeling winded without much exercise
- Breathing too quickly or panting and excessive coughing
- Unexplained tiredness or unusual behaviour

