

(MY TURN)

Take precautions to end tragic water-related incidents

Phoenix has recorded three drownings and 29 near drownings this year, two-thirds of them in hot tubs or swimming pools. Although few of the incidents resulted in death, as a physician, I've witnessed too many dreadful after-effects of



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near-drowning, which can impair a body for a lifetime.

No matter what the season or where you are, drowning is a danger. I know

that no matter what the age we must try to prevent it. It's important to think of near-drowning as a potential life-crippling injury.

When I was a third-year medical student, I had a patient who was the victim of a near-drowning. He was a beautiful 2-year-old, healthy child, up-to-date on all of his shots and well taken care of. But one day his mother forgot to empty just 2 inches of water from a bucket that she was using. The toddler found the bucket, bent over to play and was later found face down.

Despite reviving him with resuscitative efforts, he was brain dead. The child spent an extended stay in the intensive-care unit, and had several episodes of aspiration pneumonia and sepsis. Aspiration pneumo-

nia is a form of pneumonia that can develop when a foreign material, such as water and other liquids, food, vomit or mucus, is accidentally inhaled into the lungs. Sepsis occurs when toxins build up in the blood or tissues.

Most children do not survive near-drowning incidents, but for those who do, brain damage can diminish their quality of life. That depends on the length of stay under water, how fast resuscitative efforts were started and the temperature of the water.

Many survivors of a near-drowning need 24-hour assisted professional care and supervision because they cannot take care of themselves. They can no longer eat and breathe on their own and often parents are unable to care for their child. In most cases the child is placed in a long-term care facility.

I still remember that little boy from when I was a medical student. He died nine months later of complications of sepsis and pneumonia.

It's the reason I am a staunch advocate of drowning

prevention at all times of the year, especially during summer.

It takes only a few seconds for a child to slip away out of your sight. Help put an end to these shocking statistics.

Valley resident and an urgent-care physician with Cigna Medical Group.

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Prevent drowning

Steps for parents and caregivers:

- » Install child-safe door latches and always lock doors leading outside.
- » Supervise children at all times.
- » Remove all toys from the backyard that might draw a child's interest.
- » Install a fence around the pool with a self-latching gate.
- » Keep rescue equipment near the pool, including a telephone.
- » Keep a list of emergency phone numbers handy.
- » Learn CPR.
- » Never use flotation devices as substitutes for supervision.

For information about CPR classes, contact your local fire department, American Red Cross or hospital.

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