



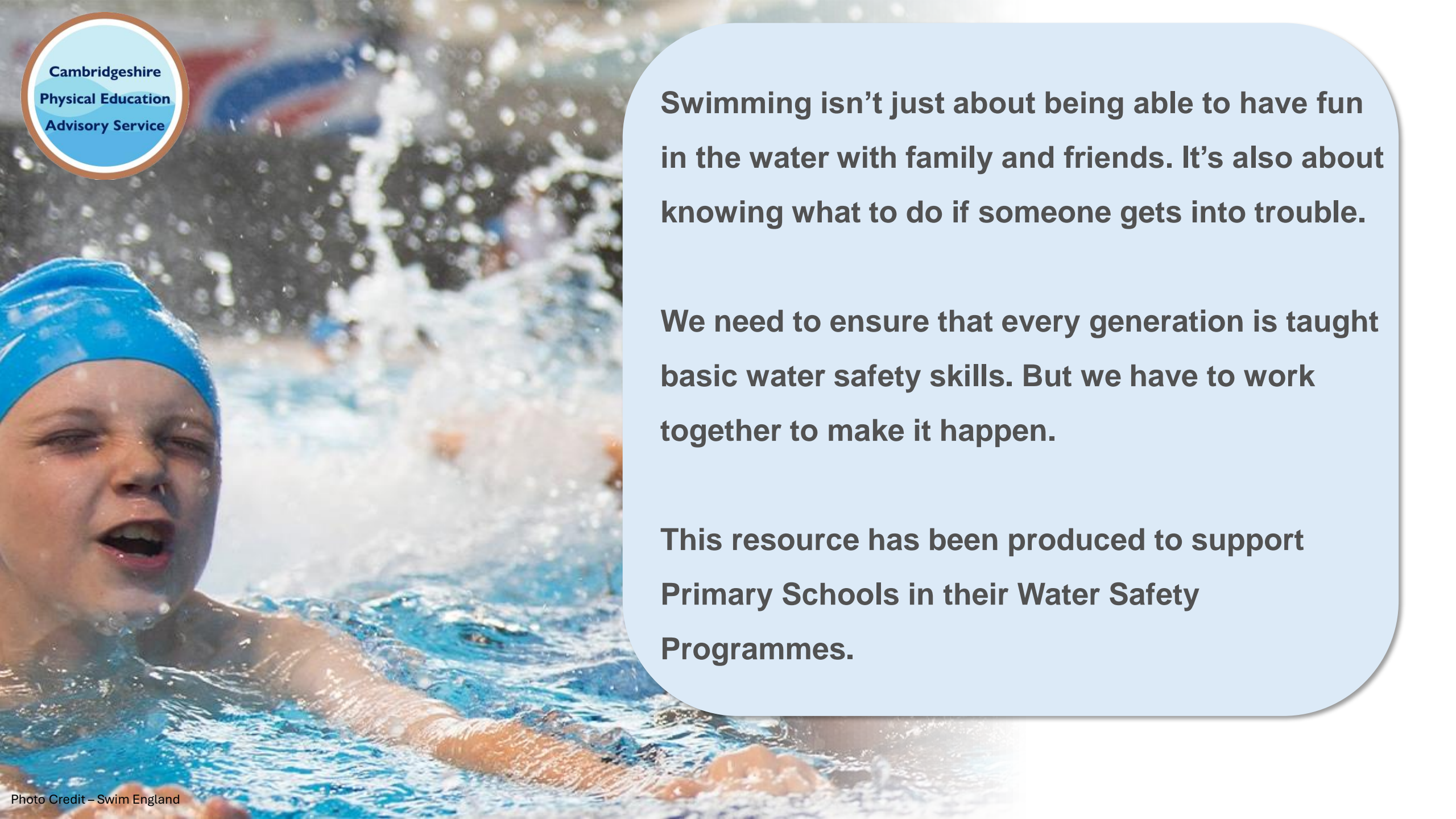
Keeping Children safe around water

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<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/services-to-schools/pe/>



Swimming isn't just about being able to have fun in the water with family and friends. It's also about knowing what to do if someone gets into trouble.

We need to ensure that every generation is taught basic water safety skills. But we have to work together to make it happen.

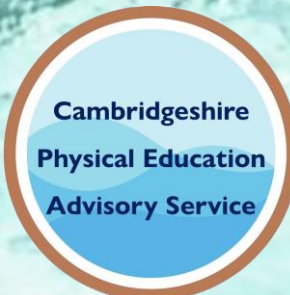
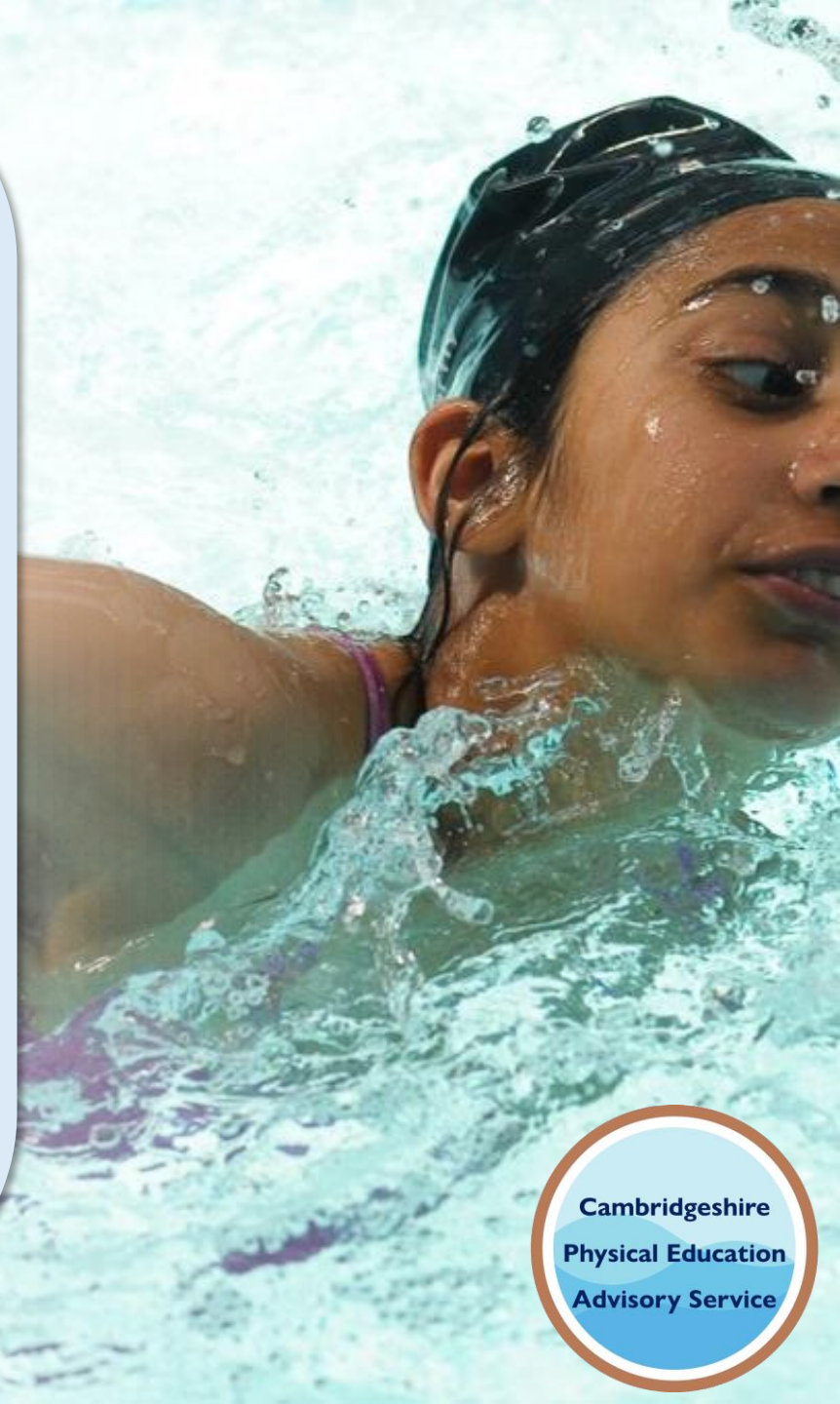
This resource has been produced to support Primary Schools in their Water Safety Programmes.

Introduction

Pupils must have a clear understanding of the principles of safety in and around water. It is vital that every pupil has the opportunity to learn how to survive and use safe self-rescue skills. They should know how to get out of trouble if they fall into water, know the dangers of water and understand the key water safety messages.

Water can be fun and enjoyable but it also presents unknown hazards. Although learning to swim may help those who find themselves in difficulty in water, pupils should know that in open water, even strong swimmers can get into trouble.

Pupils should be taught to assess risk and apply the principles of water safety.



“Swimming ability [should] be promoted as a necessary component of water competence, but with the understanding that swimming ability alone is [often] not sufficient to prevent drowning”

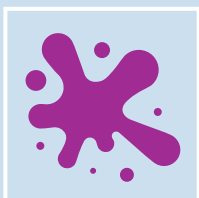
Brenner, Moran, Stallman, Gilchrist and McVan (2006)



A big part of early swimming lessons involves learning how to enjoy the water safely. This means understanding what to do if you get into trouble and how to call for help. This is also known as 'safe self-rescue'.



With drowning being the third most common cause of accidental death in children, it is vital that young people know about the dangers of different types of water.



For example, swimming in the open water with its currents, cold water and muddy banks and weed is very different from swimming in a pool.





Drowning is a quick and silent killer.



6 Minutes Maximum

Kids can disappear under water in a split second... And within 6 minutes, things can change forever.

In the time it takes to:

Get a towel
10 Seconds
a child can become submerged

Answer the phone
2 Minutes
a submerged child can lose consciousness

Answer the front door
4-6 Minutes
a submerged child can sustain permanent brain damage or die

Distractions can wait. A child who has slipped under the water can't.



10 Drowning Facts

47% OF ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS occur between May and August.

Only 30% of parents surveyed said they were 'very confident' that their child knows how to stay safe in and around water.

83% of those who drown accidentally in the UK are male.

Only 51% of Black children in the UK can swim, compared to 73% for White British children

59% of UK accidental drownings occur at inland water sites.

Around two thirds of UK adults surveyed have never had any formal training or education in water safety.

47% of those who lost their life to accidental drowning in the UK **never intended to be in the water.**

An average of **312 UK and Irish Citizens** lose their life to accidental drowning each year.

In our analysis, **73% of accidental UK drownings** occurred in the absence of professional supervision, such as a RLSS UK qualified lifeguard

Alcohol and/or drugs are a factor in **32% of all UK accidental drownings.**

Drowning is preventable.
Even one drowning is one too many.

Notes: UK drowning data taken from WAID (2017-2021). Irish drowning data taken from Water Safety Ireland (2017-2021). Overall drowning statistics exclude drowning of UK & Irish nationals overseas. Inland and Coastal split is as follows: 'Inland' includes canal/aqueduct, dry ground, drain/well, lake/loch/loough, marsh, pond, quarry, reservoir, river, stream/ditch/burn. 'Coastal' includes at sea, harbour/dock, coast/shore/beach. Excluded are bath, pool (swimming) and water container. Survey data taken from Nationally Representative survey of UK adults aged 18-65, March 2022. Swimming data based on being able to swim 25m from Sports England Active Lives Survey 20/21. RLSS UK Analysis based on 240 cases of accidental drowning in the UK.

ALWAYS FOLLOW THE WATER SAFETY CODE

Whenever you are around water:

STOP AND THINK

Look for the dangers. Always read the signs.

STAY TOGETHER

Never swim alone. Always go with friends or family.

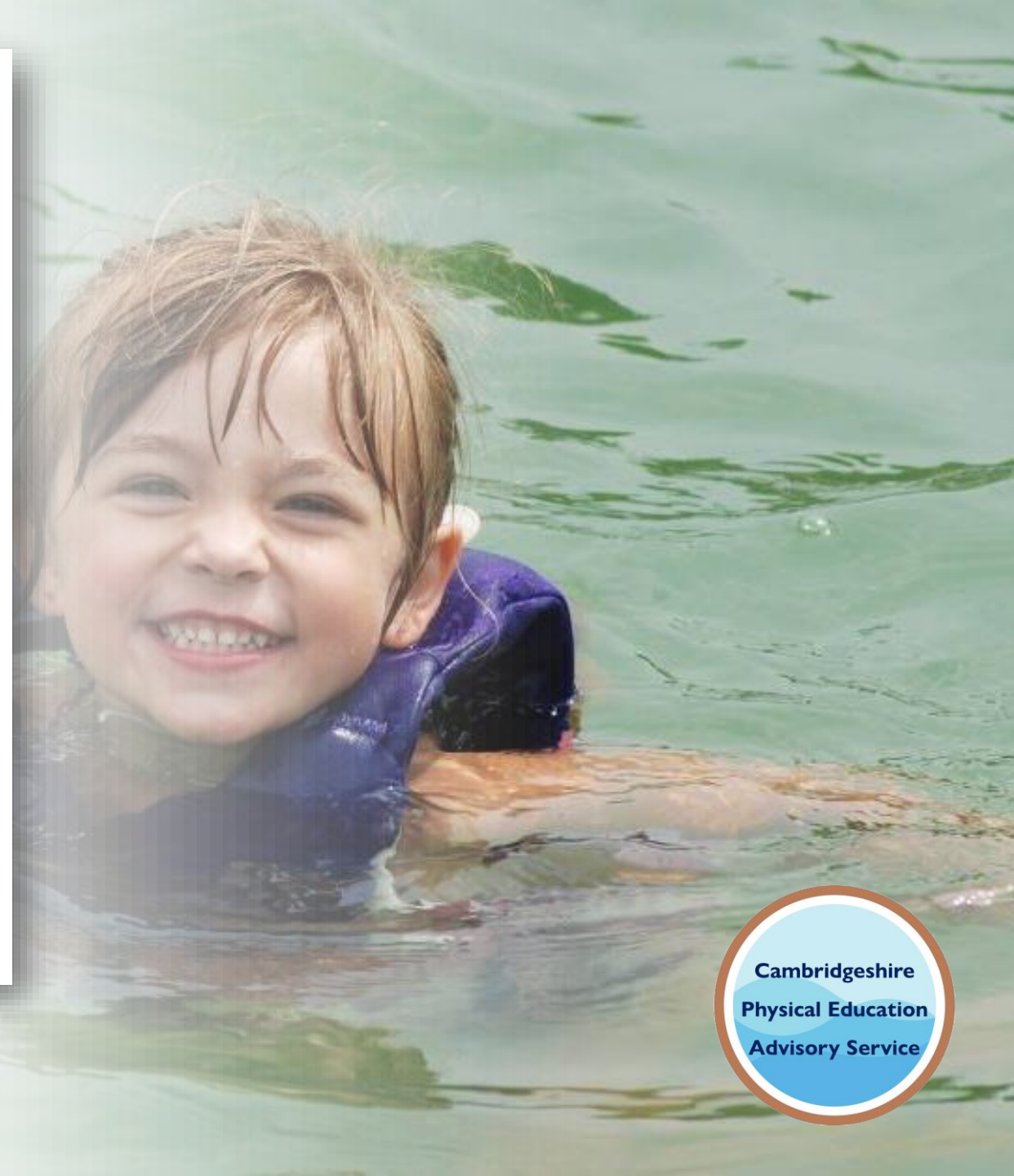
In an emergency:

CALL 999 OR 112

Shout for help and phone 999 or 112.

FLOAT

If you fall in, float or swim on your back. Throw something that floats to anyone who has fallen in.



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- Water is always moving
- The water is colder than you think
- Edges can be dangerous
- There may be dangers under water



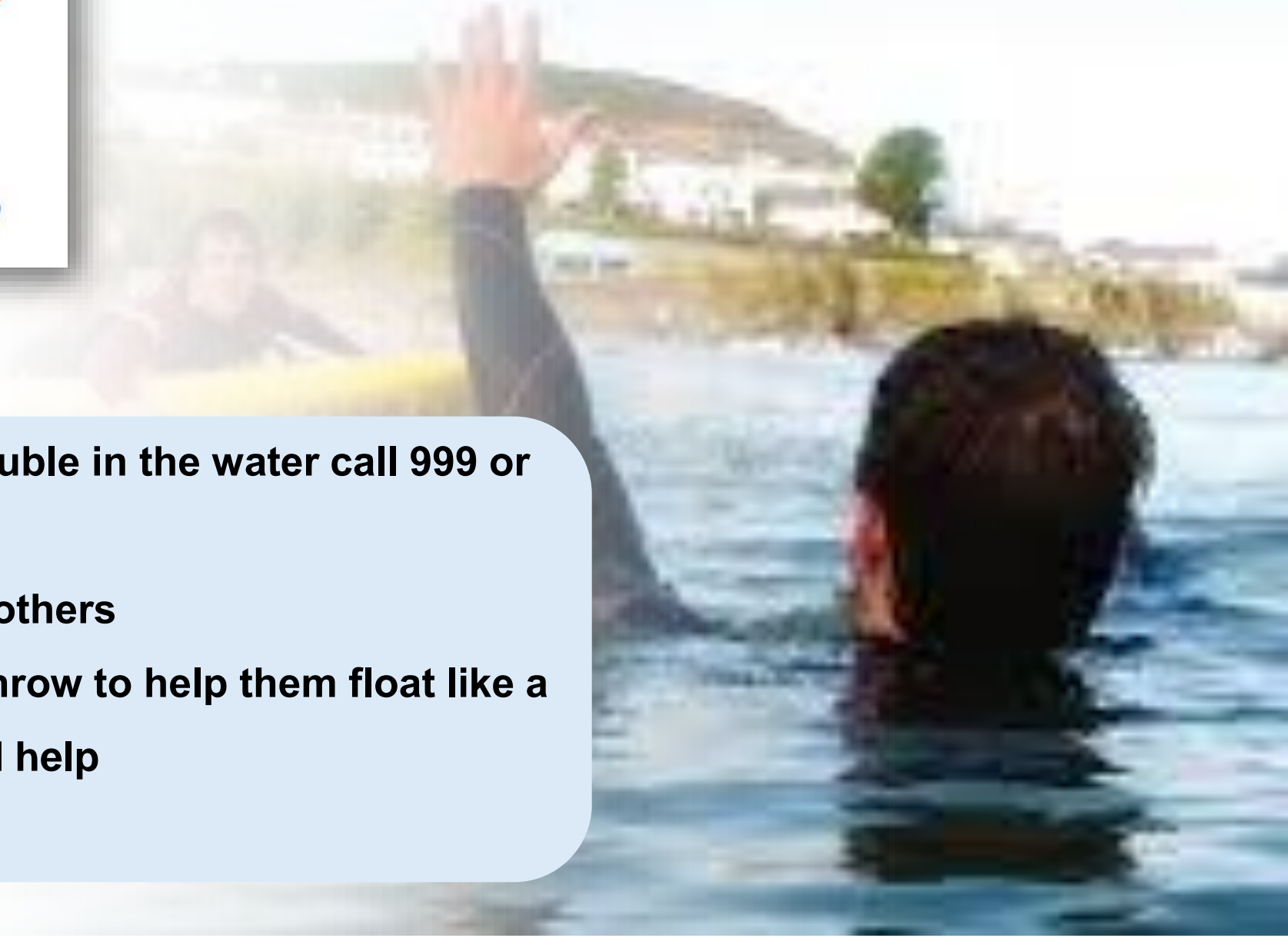


- **Never swim alone - stay close to a friend or family member**
- **Find a safe place to go - only swim in the sea where there is a lifeguard**
- **Plan your activity – check weather, tide times, get local advice and wear the right clothing for your activity**





- If you see someone else in trouble in the water call 999 or 112
- Never enter the water to save others
- Look for something you can throw to help them float like a life ring or even a football could help
- Keep watch until help arrives





FLOAT

- If you fall in, float until you feel calm
- Signal for help, raising one hand in the air and shouting for help
- If you can, swim to safety or hold on to something that floats
- Keep warm if you can't swim to safety, using the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP) or huddle position



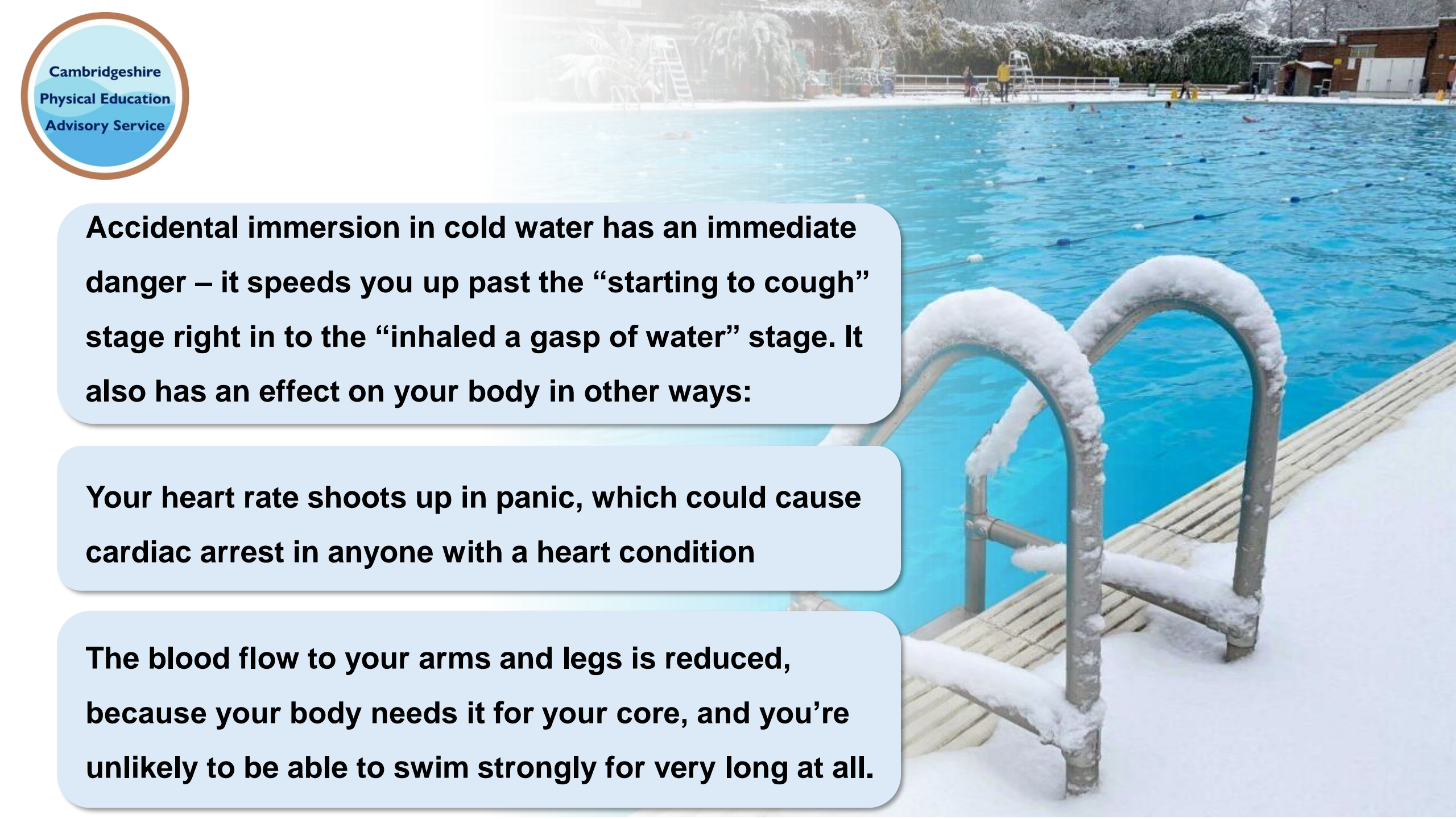
How does the cold affect the body?

Have you ever stepped in to a cold shower by accident, or had a drop of cold water hit the back of your neck? The first thing you do is take a gasp.

The average temperature of outdoor water in the UK is only 11C. That's cold enough to produce an effect in your body called "cold water shock":

Now imagine if you've fallen in to a river and taken that involuntary gasp whilst your head is underwater. You'll breathe in water, and start choking.





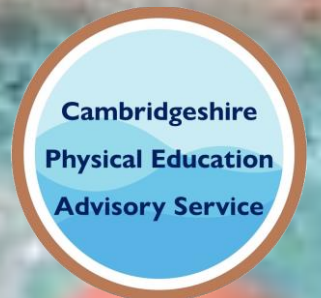
Accidental immersion in cold water has an immediate danger – it speeds you up past the “starting to cough” stage right in to the “inhaled a gasp of water” stage. It also has an effect on your body in other ways:

Your heart rate shoots up in panic, which could cause cardiac arrest in anyone with a heart condition

The blood flow to your arms and legs is reduced, because your body needs it for your core, and you’re unlikely to be able to swim strongly for very long at all.

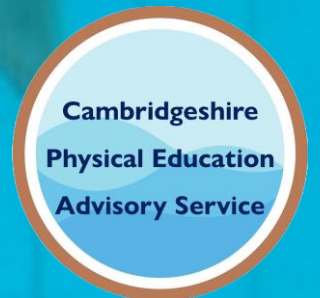
Safety advice for Children who fall into water

- Keep calm. Cold water shock may start to affect breathing and coordination, but it's possible that you will be able to regain control after a short time.
- Float on your back and try to regain control of your breathing.
- When you're calm, float, scull or tread water and signal for help, raising one hand in the air and shouting for help.
- If possible, swim to safety or something that floats.
- Holding the floating object, adopt the Heat Escape Lessening Position (HELP) which will slow the loss of body heat.
- If there is more than one of you, adopt the Huddle position to retain body heat communally.
- Hold on to support and float facing away from any waves to prevent the water splashing on your face.
- Try and stay out of the water as much as possible, for example on a floating object.
- Try and keep your head above water – intermittent submersion of the head will increase heat loss.
- To conserve body heat do not move more than is absolutely necessary.



The 'DON'Ts'

- Don't swim unless you are forced to do so to keep afloat or to get clear of danger.
- Don't try to swim for the shore unless you are a good swimmer and the shore is within reasonable distance e.g. up to 200 metres in cold water or up to 50 metres in very cold water.
- Don't move more than is absolutely necessary.
- Don't attempt to exercise to keep warm.
- Don't remove clothing, except items that interfere with floatation (i.e. heavy overcoats, boots, etc.). Lightweight everyday clothing can substantially reduce heat loss by preventing the continuous movement of cold water around the body.



Children need to know about the dangers they may encounter around water in their home such as paddling pools and ponds, the swimming pool and at outdoor water locations.

Children need to understand and apply the principles of water safety in these different water environments.

Children should also understand that swimming in open water is very different to swimming in heated pools and that even strong swimmers can get into difficulties when swimming in water that is cold, unpredictable and deep.



To ensure pupils fully understand this important area, 'water-based situations' should not only cover how an incident could occur, but also different types of water space.

Examples of **how** an incident could occur:

Falling into water when playing on a footpath	Falling out of a boat
Swimming in clothes	Becoming tired
Sustaining an injury	Being out of one's depth
Hampered by weeds or underwater hazards	Rough water or tides

Examples of **where** an incident could occur:

Homes and gardens	Swimming pools
Beaches	Rivers
Canals	Reservoirs



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If somebody has fallen in, and you are on the bank. There are three simple steps you can take to rescue them;

Talk – Reach – Throw.

Talk

If someone falls in the water, or starts to struggle the first step in rescue is to give them a focus. That focus is going to be you.

The cold-water shock response, and disorientation of falling in to water means that a person is going to panic. Your voice, in a commanding way, is going to help them.

LOOK AT ME! SWIM TO ME!

You need to shout at them. Give them commands, and use the fact that you are able to spot hazards to help them.

Can you see something dangerous that they can't?

Can you see an easy exit point from the water?

“Talk” them to safety as a first step.





Reach

If they're not able to swim themselves to safety with you telling them how/where, then you may need to use something to reach to them and help them.

Somebody who is panicking can pull you in, so always use something that you can let go of if you need to.

This could be a stick or tree branch, but you could look around for something else to use, for example:

- Fishing rod
- Broom or garden tool
- Paddle or oar
- Handful of reeds

References and further resources

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum

Swimming ability, water safety education, and drowning prevention (2006) in Handbook of Drowning: Prevention, Rescue, Treatment.

Swim England Teaching Swimming and Water Safety at Key Stage 1 or 2: Water Safety Resource (2024)

Swimming and water safety in the national curriculum – Swim England 2019

Water Safety organisations

The following organisations provide a wide range of water safety and drowning prevention resources for primary schools:

Swim England

www.swimming.org/schools

Canal and River Trust

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers/water-safety

Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)

www.rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources

Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS)

www.rlss.org.uk/water-safety/water-safety-resources/

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

www.rospace.com/leisure-safety/water/advice/children-young-people/