

Cold water will put swimmers lives at risk next week when we enter phase one of the Governments Road Map for Reopening Society & Business

Water Safety Ireland is concerned that cold water, the main factor in drownings, will put lives at risk as we enter phase one of the Governments Road Map for Reopening Society & Business. People need to be mindful of the HSE & Government guidelines in particular regard to travel, exercise and social distancing. On average, five people drown in Ireland every fortnight (124 every year) and cold water is the main factor in most of these drownings. The shock of cold water immersion and the onset of hypothermia are two factors that will put people at risk when visiting coastlines and inland waterways for their swim. The lifeguard service is not deployed until the end of the month and for Weekends only during June. People have a responsibility to themselves and family to stay safe around water by knowing the dangers and learning from previous situations that have led to tragic drownings:

- Swimmers must adhere to the Governments guidelines on social distancing and stay within 5 Km of their residence for swimming activities
- Swimmers should swim parallel and close to the shore and be aware that water temperature, (11°C coastal, 14°C inland) is still too cold for extended swims. Wear a wetsuit and “**Swim within your depth and stay within your depth**”. See Guidelines at <https://watersafety.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Open-Water-Swimming-Final-231219.pdf>
- Children require constant uninterrupted supervision near water. Before you go for your swim, take your children through the online resources so that they know what they are getting in to <https://watersafety.ie/primary-school>
- Alcohol should be avoided before or during any aquatic activity. On average, a third of drowning victims had consumed alcohol.
- Always wear a lifejacket when on or near water and when angling from shore. Ensure that it is properly maintained and has a correctly fitted crotch strap.
- Those going afloat should carry a portable Marine VHF and/or a personal locator beacon and walkers should carry a mobile phone to call 112 in an emergency.
- In an emergency call 112 and ask for the Coast Guard. Always call early.

The dangers of cold water immersion: When cold water makes contact with your skin, the cold shock response causes an immediate loss of breathing control, possible dizziness and panic. This dramatically increases the risk of sudden drowning even if the water is calm and you know how to swim. For those who survive this but are unable to get out of the water, progressive body cooling leads to hypothermia and muscle cooling, making swimming more difficult or impossible. Children cool even faster than adults because they are smaller and have less fat.

What to do if you fall in to cold water: Avoid swimming, stay calm and relax. Float or tread water and if possible get as much of your body out of the water because you will always cool faster in water than in air. Wearing a lifejacket with a crotch strap will enable you to lessen heat escape by keeping your legs together and elbows by your side.

Those going afloat should carry a portable Marine VHF and/or a personal locator beacon and walkers should carry a mobile phone to call 112 in an emergency.

Media Enquiries to:

Water Safety Ireland, The Long Walk, Galway

www.watersafety.ie Mobiles: John Leech 087-6789600 Roger Sweeney 087-6789601