

As the summer holidays approach and with the weather being extra warm, we wanted to remind you about the importance of water safety.

Being around water can be a lot of fun, but we want people to stay safe.

Swimming or even paddling in open water can be very risky, with hidden dangers ranging from strong underwater currents to cold water shock. These risks apply to all open water, whether it's reservoirs or lakes, rivers or weirs.

But what is cold water shock?

Cold water shock is when the body is suddenly immersed in cold water it experiences a number of physiological responses that can rapidly incapacitate and even kill.

At a water temperature below 15°C, that's more or less the summertime average around the UK, and if you are not wearing a life jacket, especially an automatic one, cold water shock will:

- cause you to inhale as you go under the water, due to an involuntary gasping reflex, and drown without coming back to the surface
- drastically reduce your ability to hold your breath underwater, typically from a minute or so to less than 10 seconds
- induce vertigo as your ears are exposed to cold water, resulting in failure to differentiate between up and down

At Northumbrian Water, we do not allow unauthorised swimming or boats (including dinghies) at our reservoirs and waterparks for safety reasons. We advise people to join proper swimming or water sports clubs if they want to more safely enjoy the water.

People are urged to follow these safety tips, to help themselves and others to stay safe.

- Take notice of any safety advice or warning signs, such as no swimming signs, a red flag or "danger, deep water" signs.
- Always accompany children. Stay close to your group and stay in sight at all times.
- Never go near water if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs - this is the number one cause of water-related deaths.
- Stay clear of strong currents, weirs, rapids and reservoir edges.
- Watch out for slippery banks, soft sand and rocks.
- Don't jump or dive in - you don't know how deep it is going to be.
- Wear something on your feet. There may be sharp rocks, rubbish or broken glass under the water.
- Messing around can be dangerous - don't splash water at other people or push them over.
- Get out of the water as soon as you start to feel cold.
- If you accidentally fall in, don't panic. Lean back, relax and try to float until you catch your breath and you can safely swim back or call for help.
- Never go deeper than welly height when playing in rivers as the strong current can easily knock you over.
- Cover any cuts and scratches with water proof plasters. Weil's Disease can be caught from

rat urine.

- Learn to swim - it could save your life.

A full water safety checklist is available at <https://www.nwl.co.uk/your-home/learn-about-water/water-safety.aspx>

The following videos may also prove useful when talking to children or groups about water safety.

Olympic swimmer Chris Cook: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBHmFU5d5I8>

Paralympian Dame Sarah Storey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIRs-DaQxxk>

Newcastle Eagles player Themba Yabantu: https://youtu.be/z0pnsN7yg_I

Firefighter Tom Richardson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0sooUSSvro>

Northumbrian Water's Melanie Roberts: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_fNzSfG_P4

Northumbrian Water's Tom Bell: <https://youtu.be/665m9yliwDo>