



Be safe around water

Swimming is a lot of fun and is really good for you in a safe environment. But each year around 50 children under the age of 16 drown. It's the third most common cause of accidental death amongst youngsters. It's easy to see why.

- Water can be very cold
- It can be deep
- It may be shallower than you think!
- There may be strong currents
- There may be hidden rubbish underneath – like shopping trolleys or broken glass
- It can be difficult to get out (the banks maybe slippery or too steep)

In June this year, 18-year-old Jonathan Morton drowned in a tragic accident in the Hampshire Avon river at Downton.

His death is a reminder of the dangers that swimming in rivers or the sea may present. Now as the school holidays approach children need to be especially aware of the risks.

The Environment Agency promotes the use of water for recreation purposes and also wants to warn of the dangers.

Keep yourself safe, when you are in, on or beside water.



Spot the dangers!

Water may look safe, but it can be dangerous. Learn to spot and keep away from dangers. You may swim well in a warm indoor pool, but that does not mean that you will be able to swim in cold water.

The dangers of water include:

- The speed of many rivers and sea currents are often well beyond the ability of even the strongest swimmers to cope with safely
- Unseen underwater obstructions exist in many places. These can include submerged pipe outfalls and discarded items such as shopping trolleys
- Other hazards such as broken glass and metal that have been illegally dumped can cut and injure. Weeds can also trap the unwary swimmer
- Weirs, locks, piers and other structures demand extra care from users and visitors

Take safety advice!

Special flags and notices may warn you of danger. Know what the signs mean and do what they tell you.

Go together!

Children should always go with an adult, not by themselves. An adult can point out dangers or help if somebody gets into trouble.

Learn how to help!

You may be able to help yourself and others if you know what to do in an emergency. If you see someone in difficulty, tell somebody, preferably a Lifeguard if there is one nearby, or go to the nearest telephone, dial 999, ask for the Police at inland water sites and the Coastguard at the beach.

Trying to rescue a person can put you in danger. You should do everything possible to avoid getting into a dangerous situation in the first place. If you have to make a rescue attempt, think of your own safety first. If the rescue is too dangerous, wait until the emergency services arrive.

Remember

- Don't jump or dive into rivers or open water where the depth is uncertain. If you cannot see the bottom it may just be that the water is not clear
- Be aware of the dangers of structures
- Be prepared for cold water or changes in weather
- Make sure you are supervised by an adult
- Don't swim where there may be strong currents and undertows

The message is clear: Please take care when in, on and around the water

