

COLD WATER SHOCK

WHAT IS COLD WATER SHOCK?



Cold water shock is dangerous and can lead to death in less than three minutes

Cold water shock can occur when your body undergoes sudden immersion in cold water that is less than 15°C. It causes uncontrollable breathing and increases the work of the heart, which can lead to hypothermia and drowning.

As your heart beats faster, blood vessels in your skin rapidly begin to close making it difficult for blood to flow.

Signs of cold water shock include:

- Rapid cooling of skin, pale skin
- Rapid and uncontrolled breathing patterns, hyperventilation
- Panic

RISKS OF COLD WATER SHOCK



Heart attack on immersion



Other cardiac problems



Physical incapacitation



Hypothermia



Unconsciousness



Fatal and non-fatal drowning

HOW TO STAY SAFE

- Check the weather forecast and water conditions (be aware that conditions can change rapidly)
- Wear a lifejacket in and around water
- Wear suitable protective clothing (eg, a wetsuit)
- Do not go alone. Go with a friend
- Avoid recreating around water at night
- Avoid alcohol consumption in and around water

ACCIDENTAL FALLS

If you accidentally fall into cold water:

- Keep calm and do not panic. Breathe normally
- If you can, call and signal for help
- Hold on to something to help you float and climb out of the water, if possible
- Avoid swimming. Keep movement to a minimum