


NORTHUMBRIAN
WATER *living water*

STAY SAFE

Be aware of
hidden dangers
around water

www.nwl.co.uk

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Being in and around water is great fun but can be very dangerous. Cold water, hidden debris and underwater currents mean that reservoirs, lakes, rivers, open waters, ponds and the sea can be extremely dangerous.

LEARN TO SWIM

Learning to swim could save your life and swimming pools are the safest places to swim. Water is fun and if you're sensible and follow water safety rules, you can have a brilliant time with your family and friends.

Visit www.swimming.org for everything you need to know about learning to swim and where to find your nearest pool.

We want you to have fun visiting our leisure sites, but we also want you to keep safe.

Swimming is not allowed in any of our reservoirs, so thank you for not swimming or paddling in them.

Our reservoirs are very beautiful and it may be tempting to take a dip on a hot day, but they are operational sites so there are many hidden dangers underneath the water. These can include unknown depths, extremely cold water, machinery and really strong underwater currents as the water is pumped from the reservoir through to the water supply chain so even the strongest swimmers can get into serious difficulty.

INVISIBLE DANGERS

Even if you are a strong swimmer there are lots of invisible dangers to be aware of:

- Very cold water. Jumping into cold water can kill you in less than a minute. As you enter the water, your body goes into shock. This means that you automatically gasp for air which means you inhale water into the lungs leading to drowning. The

cold water can also cause abnormal heart rhythms which could lead to a heart attack - even in healthy young people.

Even when the sun is out and the weather is hot, the water underneath the surface can be really cold as the heat of the sun cannot reach it.

- Fast currents, rapids, weirs and rip tides.
- Rubbish such as broken glass, scrap metal, bottles and cans.
- Steep sides.
- Slippery banks and rocks.
- Unknown depths.
- Plants and reeds.
- Pollution.
- Rat urine - if you develop flu like symptoms three to 19 days after playing in untreated water, such as a river or stream go to your doctor and ask to be tested for Weil's Disease. This is carried in the urine of rats and can be fatal.

IF SOMEONE ELSE IS IN TROUBLE

Stop, think and keep calm.

1. A drowning person is very strong and will cling to anything that they can - don't jump in after them. They could quickly push you under water and you don't want to become a casualty too!
2. Shout for help, and send for the emergency service (either by dialling 999 on your mobile phone or by getting someone to go to the nearest phone).
3. Shout to the casualty to keep their arms in the water and kick their legs.
4. Try and reach them from the bank using a rope, pole, tree branch, clothing tied together or anything else that can extend your reach.
5. When reaching from the bank, lie down to avoid being pulled into the water.
6. Throw something for them to hold onto to stay afloat such as a plastic container, throw line or life belt if available.

7. If the casualty is too far away, do not attempt to rescue them. Wait for the emergency services while calming and reassuring the casualty.

IF YOU ARE IN TROUBLE

1. Keep calm and call for help.
2. Try to stand up. If the water is too deep but near land try to swim to safety.
3. Keep signalling for help, if you cannot get to land, and slowly tread water to preserve heat and energy.
4. Once you are safe, go to hospital immediately for a check up.

WATER SAFETY CHECKLIST

- 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.
- 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.