



accidents don't have to happen

The xylem logo is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. It is positioned in the upper right corner of the page, set against a background of dark, turbulent water with white foam from a wave.

xylem

Cold Water Shock: Social Media Toolkit

Introduction

Cold water shock is an involuntary bodily response that can occur when someone is suddenly immersed in cold water. It can happen when someone deliberately enters the water quickly (e.g. by jumping in) or if they fall into the water accidentally. It can happen to anyone, even strong swimmers.

Cold water shock is very dangerous and can lead to drowning – it causes gasping, hyperventilation, panic and loss of swimming ability. It can also cause heart rate and blood pressure to spike, which can cause a heart attack, even if the person is fit and healthy.

Even when the weather is hot, open water like the sea, lakes, rivers and reservoirs can remain very cold. This means cold water shock is a risk all year round in many countries, particularly in the northern hemisphere. Water is considered dangerous for cold water shock when it is 15°C or below, however cold water shock can occur in water temperatures up to 24°C.

You can reduce the risk of cold water shock by entering the water slowly – this gives your body time to adapt to the cold. If you are entering the water, always do so at a supervised location, such as a lifeguarded beach, so there is someone on hand to help you if you get into trouble.

Find information about cold water shock and tips for how to protect yourself on the [**RoSPA website**](#).

Safety advice

If you think you are experiencing cold water shock, Float To Live:

1. Tilt your head back with your ears under the water
2. Stay calm and breathe normally
3. Move your hands to help you float
4. Don't worry if your legs sink, everybody floats differently
5. Once the effects of cold water shock have passed, shout for help or swim to safety



If you see someone in trouble in the water, remember Phone Float Throw:

- **Phone** the emergency services to get help
- Tell the person to stay calm and **float** on their back
- **Throw** them rescue equipment to help them float until the emergency services arrive.

Social media posts

We have created these posts to help you share information about cold water shock with your family, friends and colleagues. You can post the images and captions directly to your feed or share the information privately via direct message. Posts can be used for Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn.

Post 1

Image

Cold water shock can happen when someone is suddenly immersed in cold water. It can happen if you enter the water intentionally – such as if you jump in – or if you fall in accidentally.

Cold water shock can happen to anyone and in any type of open water – even strong swimmers. You can't control it and it occurs very quickly, and can sadly lead to drowning. It can also cause a spike in heart rate and blood pressure, which can cause a heart attack, even if you're fit and healthy.





Post 2

Image

Even when the weather is hot, open water like lakes, rivers and the sea can stay very cold. Entering the water can lead to cold water shock – this causes you to lose control of your breathing and ability to swim, which can lead to drowning. You should also always go swimming with a friend or group – not only is this more fun, it means there will always be someone around to call for help if you get into trouble.



Post 3

Image

Cold water shock is caused by entering cold water too quickly, either by jumping in or by falling in by accident. To reduce your chances of cold water shock, avoid jumping into open water and instead enter slowly, giving your body time to adjust.

If you are entering the water, always do so at a supervised location – such as a lifeguarded beach – so there is someone on hand to help you if you get into trouble.

If you find yourself in trouble in the water, Float To Live. Float on your back with your ears under the water. Try to stay calm and control your breathing. Move your arms and legs to help you float – don't worry if your legs sink, everybody floats differently. Once you feel calm and in control of your breathing, shout for help or swim to safety if you can.

