

> PARENTS AND CARERS

It's important to talk to children and young people about their safety around water. Use this leaflet.

Have a conversation about it today and explain:

- They should never swim in an unsupervised area like lochs, rivers or ponds where there isn't an adult to help if they get into trouble
- It's much safer to go to a swimming pool where there's a lifeguard on duty
- They shouldn't play with or touch lifesaving equipment like life rings by the side of waterways. That equipment might be used to save someone's life.



Even if your child can swim you must actively supervise them – half of children who drown have some swimming ability. If they are out of reach, they are not safe.

Water Safety Scotland have a complete suite of age and stage appropriate learning developed in partnership with Education Scotland that is free to download here: watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/education/water-safety-school-resources/

This is underpinned with the Water Safety Code which can be found here: watersafetyscotland.org.uk/advice-hub/water-safety-code/

> ICE

In winter, children and pets are particularly at risk when tempted to play on the ice formed on open water, and adults can find themselves at risk in attempting to save them.

- Keep off all frozen waters.
- They may not be able to handle the weight of a person.
- Keep your pet on a lead.
- Don't let children play on the ice.



> WATER ACTIVITIES

Water activities such as paddleboarding and kayaking should not be undertaken without proper training and supervision. Check that your provider is fully insured, with skilled staff and the relevant accreditation.



Visit www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/outdoors/water-safety/ for practical water safety advice. Or talk to your local firefighters. You'll find contact details on the website, in your local library and in the phone book.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format or a version in another language, please contact **0800 0731 999**.



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

v2 January 2024



@SFRSYourSafety



Fact.

Even in high summer,
**all waters around
Scotland are cold
enough to induce
cold water shock.**



**SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

> COLD WATER SHOCK



It may be tempting to go for a dip in a river or loch but open water is dangerous. It can become very cold just a few feet under the surface.

Cold water shock affects your ability to breathe, overwhelms your ability to swim, and leads to drowning. It can affect even the strongest swimmers.

Even in high summer, all waters around Scotland are cold enough to induce the cold water shock.

More info: watersafetyscotland.org.uk/information/cold-water-shock/

> STAY TOGETHER STAY CLOSE

It is safer to go near water with a friend or family member.

> FLOAT TO LIVE

Learning how to float is an essential skill – if you find yourself in the water unexpectedly it could save your life.

Take a minute: The initial shock of being in cold water can cause you to gasp and panic. The effects of cold water shock pass in less than a minute so don't try to swim straight away.

Relax and float: Float on your back while you catch your breath. Try to get hold of something that will help you float.

Keep calm: Once you're calm, call for help. Swim for safety if you are able.

More info: youtu.be/odWm3DeRFIA



> TOMBSTONING

Don't jump into the unknown. 'Tombstoning' or diving from a height can be dangerous:



- Water depths alter with the tide – the water may be shallower than it seems
- Submerged objects like rocks may not be visible – these can cause serious impact injuries
- The shock of cold water can make it difficult to swim
- Getting out of the water is often more difficult than people realise
- Strong currents can rapidly sweep people away

Enter the water by walking in so you can easily and safely get back out and this also allows your body to acclimatise to the water.

> IN AN EMERGENCY

If you see someone in trouble DO NOT enter the water.

- Look for a throw line or life ring to help while you wait on the emergency services.
- Call 999 or 112.
- For inland waters ask for the Fire and Rescue Service.
- For coastal waters ask for the Coastguard.

> ALCOHOL AND WATER

If you've been drinking avoid walking near water. You may not realise how unsteady on your feet you are. It's likely to be dark so fewer people will see you in distress. If you fall in after drinking your chances of being able to get out of the water are decreased as alcohol impairs even simple movements. Keep an eye on any friends who are worse for wear and make sure you help them home.

> OUT FOR A RUN / WALK

An average of 10 people die in Scotland each year because they fell in the water while out for a run or a walk – these activities have the highest incidence of accidental drowning in the UK. When running or walking next to water, stay clear of the edges. Stick to proper pathways. Don't walk or run next to water if levels are high. Avoid walking or running near water in the dark. More info: www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/outdoors/water-safety/runners-and-walkers/

> DOG WALKING

Never enter the water to rescue your dog - who will rescue you? Most dogs manage to scramble out – some owners are not so lucky.



More info: www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/outdoors/water-safety/dog-walking/

> OPEN WATER SWIMMING

Outdoor swimming has become really popular and is great for fitness and mental health. The advice to people who are not experienced open water swimmers is to be prepared and understand the risks of open water swimming. If you are thinking of taking the plunge then make sure you see this safety advice:



www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Be-Water-Aware-Activities-in-water

Better still join a club for support and guidance.