

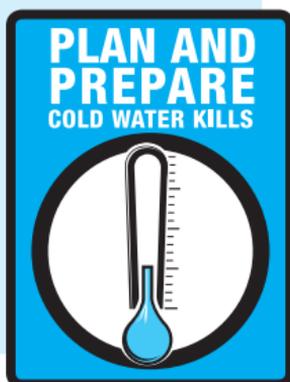
Signs of hypothermia

Immersion in cold water can quickly affect the brain. This creates a dangerous situation because a person may not realise they are in danger.

Obvious signs are:

- Intense shivering
- Slurred speech
- Confusion
- Slowing pulse
- Dilated eye pupils

Eventually, a hypothermic person will lose consciousness and may drown if not wearing a lifejacket.



Treatment of hypothermia

The aim should be to reduce any further heat loss and try to commence rewarming slowly.

- Begin artificial respiration if necessary.
- Wet clothing should be removed and dry clothes, blankets and other warm materials applied (body heat can also be used).
- If conscious, give warm drinks (never alcohol).
- Avoid rough handling and exercising of the victim.
- Remember to warm the person slowly, never put them close to a fire or in a hot bath.



Maritime is a Division of Roads and Maritime Services

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Hypothermia

Cold water kills

Hypothermia is the term used to describe the lowering of body temperature due to exposure to cold air or water.

The loss of body heat is one of the greatest hazards to a person in the water.

The loss of body heat depends on:

- The water temperature (the cooler the water, the greater the loss).
- The type and amount of clothing worn (woollen or thermal clothing reduces heat loss).
- The areas of the body which are exposed (most heat loss occurs from the head, chest and groin areas).
- The amount of physical activity (swimming increases heat loss).

Awareness

Be aware of the possibility of suffering hypothermia while boating; this can result from immersion or from being in damp/wet clothes and being exposed to wind chill.

Water temperatures are regularly lower than 20 degrees celsius throughout the year and therefore dangerous for long-term immersion. Craft should be fitted with buoyancy to keep them afloat even when flooded. This will increase the chances of being located quickly after a capsize or swamping.

Wear appropriate clothing

Wear clothing capable of containing body heat when fabric is wet. Special thermal clothing can be purchased which is designed to retain body heat. Woollen clothing also has good heat retention qualities.

Head protection

Keep the head covered and warm – a woollen beanie is ideal.

Outer garments

Wet weather gear over warm clothing provides a “wetsuit” effect which reduces body heat loss.

Avoid excessive physical activity

Swimming increases the amount of body heat loss. In extremely cold water, it is difficult to swim any great distance. It is best to adopt the H.E.L.P. position, or huddle together with other survivors. If possible stay with the craft.

Lifejackets

Lifejackets must be worn if you are forced into the water – to keep you afloat without strenuous exercise. A lifejacket Type 1 offers the best support and is compulsory to be worn on open waters and on smaller craft on alpine waters. Visit www.maritime.nsw.gov.au to view full details of the lifejacket requirements.



H.E.L.P. position



Huddle position

Boating and fishing can be enjoyable in the cooler months.

But remember, the risk of developing hypothermia is greater at these times so always remember to:

- Wear warm thermal clothing.
- Eat and drink appropriately (eg: thermos of tea).
- Watch the weather.
- Tell your crew about hypothermia and how to reduce the risks.
- Have your lifejacket ready for use, preferably wearing it.
- Fit buoyancy to your boat.

Please note: Hypothermia can also occur in warmer months.