

Cold Water Immersion

Cold water immersion creates a specific condition known as immersion hypothermia. It develops much more quickly than standard hypothermia because water conducts heat away from the body 25 times faster than air. Typically people in temperate climates don't consider themselves at risk from hypothermia in the water, but hypothermia can occur in any water temperature below 70°F.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include:

- Panic and shock (which may lead to cardiac arrest).
- Severe strain of the body.
- Total disorientation.
- Numbed extremities (to the point of uselessness).
- Severe pain.
- Unconsciousness.
- Hypothermia.

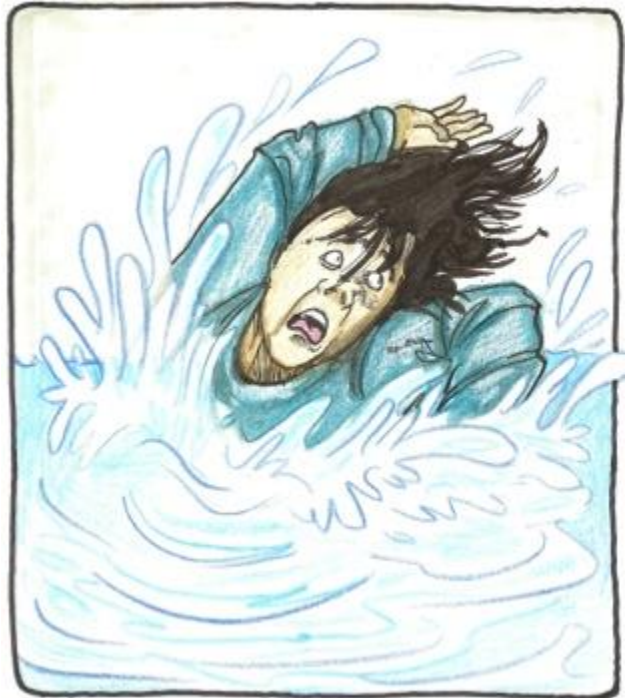
Late symptoms ("near" drowning) may include:

- Blue skin.
- No detectable breathing.
- No apparent pulse or heartbeat.
- Pupils fully dilated.

First Aid

In severe cases where the victim is semi-conscious, immediate steps must be taken to begin the rewarming process.

- Get the person out of the water and into a warm environment. Remove the clothing only if it can be done with a minimum of movement of the victim's body. Do not massage the extremities.
- Lay the semi-conscious person face up, with the head slightly lowered, unless vomiting occurs. The head down position allows more blood to flow to the brain.
- If advanced rescue equipment is available it can be administered by those trained in its use. Warm humidified oxygen should be administered by facemask.
- Immediately attempt to rewarm the victim's body core. If available, place the person in a bath of hot water at a temperature of 105 to 110 degrees. It is important that the victim's arms and legs be kept out of the water to prevent "after-drop". After-drop occurs when the cold blood from the limbs is forced back into the body resulting in further lowering of the core temperature. After-drop can be fatal.
- If a tub is not available, apply hot, wet towels or blankets to the victim's head, neck, chest, groin, and abdomen. Do not warm the arms or legs.
- If nothing else is available, a rescuer may use his or her own body heat to warm a hypothermia victim.
- Never give alcohol to a hypothermia victim.



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