

Wild Swimming Safety at a glance

for river and lake swimmers

Before entering any open water it is advisable to carry out your own risk assessment of the site. This list is provided to help you do this. However, it cannot be comprehensive. Perhaps even more important is local knowledge. Talk to a local swimmer, or better still swim with one.

Accidents spoil the fun of wild swimming.



**DANGER
STEEP BANKS**

1. Make sure you can get out before you get in.



**RISK of COLD SHOCK
SAFER TO
WALK IN FIRST**

2. Is the water cold? If so, and you jump in, you may involuntarily

breath water in and drown. Safer to walk in from shallows.



**CLOUDY WATER
Check for obstructions**

3. Is the water cloudy? If you can't see through it, you don't know

what's below. Jumping, or worse still diving, is especially dangerous.



**RISK OF
STEALTH CHILLING
WEAR WET SUIT**

4. Considering swimming across a river or lake? Stealth

chilling or a faulty estimate of your ability, the distance &

the conditions could cost you your life. Safer to swim

along the shore.



**CROSSING RIVER or LAKE?
BAD ESTIMATE
of ABILITY,
DISTANCE or
CONDITIONS**



**WEED
ENTANGLEMENT**

5. Some weeds can trap you. Avoid, but if caught, swim

downstream with arms only.



**WARNING
BROWN WATER
= RIVER in SPATE**

6. Is the river in spate? Brown water or sticks floating down are a

sign of this. Not only is the current fast, but it may suddenly

increase and/or be polluted.



**DANGER to PADDLERS
ABRUPT SHELVEING
or UNSTABLE BED**

7. Does the bed shelve abruptly, or is it unstable? This is could be

fatal for weak or non swimmers.



**Blue/Green
Algae Scum**

8. Is there a foul smelling blue-green scum? Greater risk in lakes

and lowland rivers. Keep away.

**WARNING: This may be
toxic to humans, pets &
fish. Keep away from
eyes & lips especially.
Do not drink water or
eat fish.**



**ROTATIONAL CURRENT
BELOW WEIR/WATERFALL
(NO ESCAPE)**

9. Will you be swimming below a weir or waterfall where there is

a reverse surface current? Most likely you cannot escape.

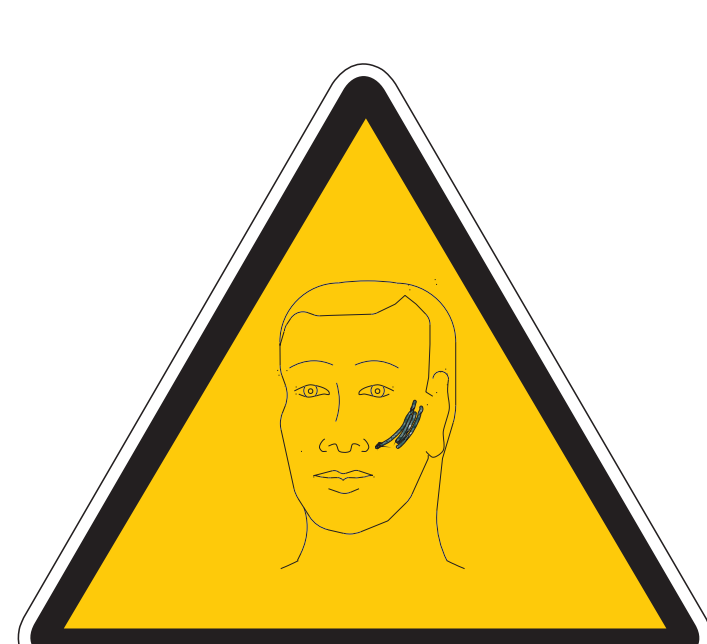


**DANGER: SLUICE
or ROCK SIPHON**

10. Is there a sluice or natural "siphon" (sometimes upstream of a

rock formation and difficult or impossible to see)? Check with canoe

sites for the location of "siphons".



**DANGER
Do not enter river
with an open wound
Risk of Weil's Disease**

11. Do you have a cut? Worse still a cut to the face? Weil's Disease.

(Low but serious risk in UK, much more so abroad.) Consider not

swimming or wear waterproof plaster. Be aware of the symptoms:

flu like with a sudden onset after 7 - 26 days. Get tested

immediately.



**FAST CURRENT
LOSS of CONTROL**

12. Can you swim faster than the current? If not, you may be carried

to places where you do not want to be, or become entrapped.



**DO YOU GET CRAMP?
BEST TO TAKE
PRECAUTIONS**

13. Do you get Cramp? Add buoyancy with a 5mm wetsuit, keep in

your depth, take stretching exercises beforehand or drink tonic

water.



**WATER QUALITY
Check with the EA**

14. Water quality? If you are concerned, then contact the

Environment Agency to find out the rating for your intended swim.

Graded: A(best) to E(worst). These days they are usually good.



**DANGER - KEEP CLEAR
BOATS**

15. Don't get run down by a boat. Using a snorkel increases the risk.

Powered craft (especially those propellers) increase the damage.

Wear a conspicuous hat. Be aware.



**DANGER - KEEP CLEAR
BOMBERS**

16. Bombers. Avoid hazard areas. If you jump in, swim away from

any hazard area before surfacing. Wear a conspicuous hat. Be aware.



**DANGER
TESTOSTERONE**

17. Youths & young men are at the greatest risk by far. Take it

carefully or I suppose you could opt for surgery!

Accidents are so boring