

Splashing Out!

Practical info about outdoor swimming to help you stay safe and have fun



Photo credit: Owen Haeman

Britain's Favourite Pastime?

Swimming has become hugely popular this year, with thousands more taking to the water for fun and health

7.5 million people swim outdoors in England, and 4.35 million of those enjoy swimming in unsupervised lakes, reservoirs, rivers and the sea. The Outdoor Swimming Society has more than 100,000 members, and there are at least 300 outdoor swimming groups across the UK. Most groups have seen their numbers grow dramatically during 2020/21.

Swimming outdoors has always been popular, but maybe the pandemic has reminded people how important it is to have fun, stay fit and well, meet people safely and spend time outdoors. For many of us, swimming is perfect!



The Benefits

Outdoor swimming is good exercise, great for your health and wellbeing, fun and (if you like) sociable too. And it's often free!



The Risks

Swimming is safer than many other activities. But it can be dangerous if you can't swim well, don't know the place or ignore the risks.

The Joys of Outdoor Swimming

Improves Health

Swimming can get you fit, promote better sleep, improve heart health and give other health benefits.

Good For Wellbeing

Two-thirds of swimmers say that swimming helps with depression, anxiety and general mental health.

Connect With Nature

Swimming outdoors connects you with water and wildlife. Many swimmers are environmentally active.

Connect Socially

Swimmers are more likely to be socially connected. Many say they feel less lonely and make new friends.

FIND OUT MORE

Outdoor Swimming Society: <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com>

Find a local group: <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/uk-wild-swimming-groups/>

OSS safety advice: <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/is-it-safe/> **and**

Top Ten Tips <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/10-tips-for-summer-swim-safety/>

Be Water Aware (Fire Chiefs' advice): <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Be-Water-Aware---Outdoor-swimming>

Swim England facts and figures: <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/key-swimming-statistics/>

NWSF Water Accident statistics: <https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid/annual-reports-and-data>

Busting Some Myths About Outdoor Swimming

False: Swimming Kills

Every drowning is tragic and we all want to reduce risks. Relatively few swimmers drown - 53 people in 2020.

False: Max Temp Is 12C

Reservoirs and lakes are usually warmer than 12C in summer. Still, they can be much colder than expected. Get in slowly, take care.

False: Banning Is Best

There is growing evidence that people ignore swimming bans. Accurate risk info keeps people safer than 'No Swimming' signs.

False: You'll Keep Me Safe

Relying on others can be dangerous. You should always check the risks, even if there's a lifeguard or coach. Swim at your own risk.

BE COOL, STAY SAFE

Swimming itself isn't especially dangerous, but water needs respect

People who deliberately go swimming outdoors rarely drown. Tragically, 242 people drowned accidentally in the UK in 2020, but only 53 (22%) of these were swimming.

More people drowned walking or running (89), or doing other things like fishing (10) or playing (15). 69 were using alcohol or drugs. Some drowned due to the shock of falling or jumping into water - it literally took their breath away. Others maybe pushed their limits or swam out too far to try to keep up with their mates. Over three-quarters of all those who drown accidentally are male, and lads aged 15-25 are most at risk.

Moving water is more dangerous and currents can be especially unpredictable. In 2020, 1 person drowned in a reservoir and 1 in a quarry, compared with 85 at the coast and 73 in rivers.

To stay as safe as possible: make sure you can swim, respect the water, be aware of risks, get in slowly and take care, stay near the shore, ignore peer pressure, and don't drink or take drugs.

If you get into difficulty in water, flip over onto your back and float to live.



Top Tips for Staying Safe in the Water

1

Be Water Aware

Always check out your swimming spot beforehand. Know the risks & reduce them.

2

Look B4 You Leap

Never jump without testing the water first. Cold shock & hidden hazards can kill.

3

Don't Drink & Dive

Alcohol and drugs make you more likely to drown. Swim first, party afterwards.

4

Learn To Swim

Deep water isn't safe for non-swimmers. If you can't swim, learn. Keep children near you.