

How to Swim Safely in Rivers and Other Natural Environments

Be Aware of Hazards & Weather

Being water competent in natural water requires additional knowledge and skills than in the pool. Whenever you are near a lake, river, stream or other natural water environment, watch and prepare for:

- Unexpected changes in air or water temperature.
- Thunder & lightning.
 - Leave the water immediately.
 - Stay inside an enclosed area for at least 30 minutes after the last thunder clap.
 - If outside, avoid open areas, tall, isolated trees and metal objects.¹
- Fast-moving currents, waves and rapids, even in shallow water.
- Hazards, such as dams, underwater obstacles, or rocks and debris.
- Vegetation, animals and fish.
- Drop-offs that can unexpectedly change water depth.
- Other people's activities in the same waters, such as boating.



Establish and Enforce Rules and Safe Behaviors

- Enter the water feet first for your safety!
 - Always enter unknown or shallow water cautiously.
 - Dive only in water clearly marked as safe for diving, at least 9 feet deep with no underwater obstacles.
- Do not enter the water from a height, such as a bridge or boat.
- Be careful when standing to prevent being knocked over by currents or waves.
- Swim sober.
- Supervise others sober and without distractions, such as reading or talking on or using a cell phone.
- Swim with a buddy.