

## **Cold Water Swimming Advice**

### **BE PREPARED!!!! for the colder weather**

- Know your limits. Swim your own swim and don't be influenced by changing room banter or bravado. As the temperature drops, decrease the time you spend in the water
- It's a good idea to ensure you have fuelled yourself properly / eaten breakfast before a cold swim to ensure your body has adequate carbohydrates to help you shiver after your swim
- Remember that shivering is the body's most effective way of warming up. A hot shower or sauna can inhibit your body's natural shivering and might make you colder in the long run
- Make sure you have LOTS OF WARM LAYERS to put on after your swim – a woolly hat is a must and ideally thick socks, gloves and multiple layers (fleeces, jumpers etc)
- Lay your clothes out BEFORE you swim so you can easily dress again afterwards
- Absolutely NO alcohol – it interferes with the body's ability to control blood flow and regulate temperature. Do not swim if you've had alcohol the night before
- Take particular care if you have high or low blood pressure or any other heart condition
- Make sure the lifeguards know if you have any medical conditions before you swim
- Know your limits, never swim alone, leave the water if you have any concerns or are advised to by one of the lifeguards
- If in doubt seek medical advice from your GP

### **Things to watch out for**

#### **1. Cold Shock Response**

- This is an involuntary gasp reflex that can occur if the face is submerged suddenly in very cold water. This can lead to hyperventilation resulting in a lack of oxygen to the brain
- Hence, you should enter the water carefully and try to avoid jumping in or diving
- Acclimatisation/habituation is very important
- As the temperature drops, swim regularly and your body will get used to the cold

#### **2. Hypothermia (progressive drop in body temperature)**

It takes a while for the body to chill but everyone is different. You may experience some of these symptoms:

- Loss of feeling / numbness in extremities
- Hands may form a "claw"

- Loss of strength in limbs, deteriorating motor control
- Feeling faint and light-headed
- Disorientation, loss of focus, mental impairment
- Feeling warm all over (yes, this is NOT a good sign)

If you experience any of these **early warning signs** get out of the water immediately

### **3. After Drop**

- Post swim, after you exit the water, your body temperature will keep dropping before it starts going up again. This is called after drop. Time is of the essence to get dry and dressed
- Quickly put on layers as this helps to insulate the body, generate heat and warm the core
- Avoid Hot showers as they suppress the shiver response and can increase after drop
- Do not go in the sauna if you are showing any signs of hypothermia. The sauna is a treat after dipping in the cold water. It should not be used as a way of warming up if your core temperature has dropped.
- Take sips of warm, sugary drinks. Not too hot as you may burn yourself, especially if you are shivering.