

HOW TO SURVIVE IN FRIGID WATER

1 Do not attempt to swim unless it is for a very short distance.

A strong swimmer has a 50-50 chance of surviving a 50-yard swim in 50-degree Fahrenheit water. Swim only if you can reach land, a boat, or a floating object with a few strokes. (Swimming moves cold water over skin, causing rapid cooling. Cold water saps body heat 25 times faster than air of the same temperature, and water any colder than 70 degrees Fahrenheit can cause hypothermia.)

2 If you are alone and wearing a flotation device, assume the heat escape lessening posture (HELP).

Cross your ankles, draw your knees to your chest, and cross your arms over your chest. Your hands should be kept high on your chest or neck to keep them warm. Do not remove clothing. Clothes will not weigh you down but will hold warm water against your skin like a diver's wetsuit. This position can reduce heat loss by 50 percent.

3 If two or more people are in the water and all are wearing flotation devices, assume the "huddle" position.

Two to four people should "hug," with chest touching chest. Smaller individuals can be sandwiched between larger members. This position allows body heat to be

shared. Also, rescuers can spot groups more easily than individuals.

4 Keep movement to a minimum.

Increasing the heart rate speeds body cooling. Try to breathe normally.

5 Once you are rescued, look for signs of hypothermia.

Slurred speech and a lack of shivering are signs of severe body temperature loss. Immediately rewarm your body.

IF YOU ARE NOT WEARING A FLOTATION DEVICE

1 Grab anything that floats.

A piece of driftwood, a floating cooler, and a plastic bag full of air all work well as flotation devices.

2 If nothing buoyant is available, float on your back, tread water very slowly, or assume the HELP position (see step 2 above).

3 If you are unable to float or tread water, button the top button of a coat or shirt and splash air and water under the bottom edge of your clothing to trap air.

Trapping air under clothing may help you stay afloat, but can also be dangerous since it increases movement and hence cooling.



If two or more people are in the water together, assume the huddle position, hugging chest to chest.

TO TREAT HYPOTHERMIA AND TO REWARM

- 1** Rewarm slowly in a tub of lukewarm water (105° to 110°F), with extremities hanging out of the tub.
In hypothermia cases, cold blood pools in the extremities. If you rewarm them with the rest of the body, as blood vessels dilate, cold blood rushes back toward the heart and can trigger ventricular fibrillation and a heart attack.
- 2** Do not massage extremities.
- 3** If warm water is not available, seek a nearby shelter.
Build a fire inside—a small fire can be made in a snow cave without causing significant melting.

- 4** Give the victim sugar water, sweets, tea, glucose tablets, or other high-energy, warming foods to restore energy.

Be Aware

- Rewarming through body contact can be dangerous to a single person attempting to warm another—too much body heat may be lost in trying to rewarm the victim, resulting in two people with hypothermia. Use two people if available. Zip two sleeping bags together and put one person on either side of the victim. Keep everyone talking to help spot or prevent loss of consciousness.