

Cold Water Danger Not Limited to Hypothermia

It's almost impossible to discuss the dangers that drysuits protect you from without sounding kind of...negative. But drysuits are safety gear, facts are facts, and we're mostly adults here. So let's face some cold hard truths. Mainly cold.

Hypothermia is often viewed as *the biggest* danger associated with cold water immersion. And when one sees figures showing that even in ice-cold water, it can take an hour or more for hypothermia to kill, it makes cold water seem not so very dangerous after all. "Plenty of time to self-rescue or get rescued," you might think.

Not so. According to the [National Center for Cold Water Safety](#), death from cold water immersion can come in several forms:

Cold Shock: When your body is suddenly immersed in cold water, you lose control of your breathing. In other words, you gasp uncontrollably, often several times in a row. If your head is underwater when that happens, your lungs will fill with water and you can drown almost instantaneously.

Gradual drowning: Because you lack control over your breathing, it can be difficult to time your breaths relative to waves. If you survive cold shock, you might drown by stages as you take repeated gulps of water into your lungs. It only takes about 5 ounces of water – about two big swallows – down the wrong tube.

Heart Failure and Stroke: Immersion in cold water causes extreme, instantaneous increases in heart rate and blood pressure. If you're susceptible to heart failure, this can trigger it.

Physical Incapacitation: After about ten minutes in really cold water, you lose muscle coordination. You will be unable to perform a boat empty-and-reentry or swim any distance. Hypothermia or gradual drowning become the inevitable result.

Circumrescue Collapse: A significant percentage of people who are pulled alive from cold water die of heart failure within moments of rescue. The reason is obscure, but it may be due to a precipitous drop in blood pressure or to cold blood suddenly circulating from your limbs into your core.

Accidents happen to everyone, and people who "never capsize" have simply *not capsized yet*. If you paddle in water below 70F (21C), the thermal protection of a wetsuit or drysuit is a must.

More information on why you need to wear a drysuit when paddling on cold water: www.mythicdrysuits.com/pages/why-you-should-wear-a-drysuit