



Medical Advice

If you have any known medical condition, such as diabetes, asthma, allergy to penicillin, please inform us prior to the race by letter.

Whether you have a medical condition or not, if you feel unwell on race day – don't race!

All competitors please note: United Kingdom inland waters are not completely safe for swimming, although risks of disease are low and risks of serious infection are minute. A swimmer may be susceptible to infection through immune suppression, particularly if he or she is not in good health at the time of swimming. Be careful entering any open water swim if you are unwell.

Statements concerning the suitability of water for swimming should be interpreted cautiously. The river will be cold and triathlon wetsuits will be compulsory if the temperature is **below 14°C**. You are advised not to drink the river water!

Weil's Disease or Leptospirosis

This is an infectious condition that can cause a range of different symptoms such as mild flu-like symptoms or, in severe cases, result in multiple organ failure and internal bleeding. Following these serious symptoms, leptospirosis can sometimes result in death.

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic condition, which means that it can be spread from animals to humans. Animals such as rats, pigs and dogs can become infected by bacteria called leptospire. They can then contaminate a water source by urinating into it. If a human then comes into close contact with the infected water, such as through the eyes mouth, nose or any cuts in their skin, they can become infected with leptospirosis.

How common is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a global condition that is found across the world. Rates of leptospirosis are highest in tropical and sub-tropical locations, particularly in rural areas. However, the condition is becoming increasingly widespread in urban areas that have poor sanitation.

It is estimated that globally 10 million people will catch leptospirosis every year. It is hard to estimate how many people die from leptospirosis because many cases occur in parts of the developing world where causes of death are not routinely reported. However, some experts have estimated that the fatality rate from leptospirosis could range from five to 25%. Deaths from leptospirosis are higher in countries where access to good quality healthcare is limited. In England and Wales, leptospirosis is very rare, with an average of 40 cases being reported each year. Since 1996, there have been three deaths from leptospirosis.

Prognosis

The symptoms of leptospirosis can vary widely from person to person. Some people with the condition can have no symptoms at all, although most will experience symptoms that are similar to influenza (flu). An estimated 5 to 10% of people will experience the most serious form of leptospirosis, which is also known as Weil's disease. Weil's disease can cause:-

- Kidney failure
- Jaundice
- Shock
- Internal bleeding, and
- Inflammation of the heart.

Leptospirosis can be treated using antibiotics. Hospital admission is usually required for the most serious form of leptospirosis because the body's functions will need to be supported until the infection has passed.

For more information follow this link, but in particular, have a look at the prevention tab

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Leptospirosis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>



Hypothermia – notes for The Thames Marathon Bridge to Bridge

Skins swimmers in particular will feel the cold, but any skins swimmers on the day will be experienced as per the condition of their entry, so they should be familiar with the issues and how they are feeling. It is however possible that even swimmers in wetsuits will become too cold to continue. The following notes are taken from the NHS website. But on the day we have practical issues to contend with, like the location of the swimmer in relation to any help.

Blue lips and constant shivering are the obvious signs - irritability and slurred speech are less obvious, but intervention may be needed if the swimmer's ego is stopping them from seeking help - so ask them how they are feeling and reassure them that there's no shame in stopping if they are too cold.

If they have to get out between check points, this is actually no bad thing if they are only mildly hypothermic; make sure they get dry and see if they can walk briskly to the next checkpoint. By the time they arrive they will most likely be "cured" due to the exertion involved of walking. There are event cars at each checkpoint to take them on to Marlow.

If however they are more severely affected, contact with an event official is required so that the safety launch can be summoned to help more urgently. Given the time of year it is likely that only mild hypothermia is the issue, but don't assume that to be the case as everyone is different.

As hypothermia can be a life-threatening condition, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Hypothermia is treated by preventing further heat being lost and by gently warming the patient.

If you are treating someone with mild hypothermia at home, or waiting for medical treatment to arrive, follow the advice below to prevent further loss of heat.

Things to do for hypothermia:-

- Move the person indoors, or somewhere warm, as soon as possible.
- Once sheltered, gently remove any wet clothing and dry the person.
- Wrap them in blankets, towels, coats (whatever you have), protecting the head and torso first.
- Your own body heat can help someone with hypothermia. Hug them gently.
- Increase activity if possible, but not to the point where sweating occurs, as that cools the skin down again.
- If possible, give the person warm drinks (but not alcohol) or high energy foods, such as chocolate, to help warm them up.
- Once body temperature has increased, keep the person warm and dry.

It is important to handle anyone that has hypothermia very gently and carefully.

Things you should NOT do:-

- Don't warm up an elderly person using a bath, as this may send cold blood from the body's surfaces to the heart or brain too suddenly, causing a stroke or heart attack.
- Don't apply direct heat (hot water or a heating pad, for example) to the arms and legs, as this forces cold blood back to the major organs, making the condition worse.
- Don't give the person alcohol to drink, as this will decrease the body's ability to retain heat.
- Don't rub or massage the person's skin, as this can cause the blood vessels to widen and decrease the body's ability to retain heat. In severe cases of hypothermia there is also a risk of heart attack.

Severe hypothermia needs urgent medical treatment in hospital. Shivering is a good guide to how severe the hypothermia is. If the person can stop shivering of their own accord, hypothermia is mild, but if they cannot stop shivering, it is moderate to severe.

As the body temperature decreases further, shivering will stop completely. The heart rate will slow and a person will gradually lose consciousness. When unconscious, a person will not appear to have a pulse or be breathing. Emergency assistance should be sought immediately and CPR provided while the person is warmed. CPR is an emergency procedure, consisting of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and chest compression.

The following link is also worth a quick look - it describes the signs to look out for!

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Hypothermia/Pages/Symptoms.aspx>