

## Advisory Health Document - Open Water Swimming

### Ripon Racecourse - NYPtri Club - 2018

This document has been written to inform of potential health risks each member takes when open water swimming. It should be read in conjunction with the open water swim disclaimer and risk assessment to make your swim as safe and enjoyable as possible.

Please be aware of the following before entering the water:

- Open water swimming poses an increased risk of gastrointestinal infections, as well as respiratory, skin, ear and eye infections. Most are mild and caused by organisms such as Norovirus, Giardia, Algae and Cryptosporidium. More serious infections are caused by E.Coli 0157 and Leptospirosis (Weil's disease). Symptoms of Leptospirosis include: Vomiting, diarrhoea, severe headache, muscle pain, fatigue and ultimately organ failure. It is essential to seek medical attention urgently if you suspect infection. **This can be fatal.**
- Cold Water Shock – On entering cold water your body may display symptoms of cold water shock. You may find yourself gasping for air followed by an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and a reduction in blood flow to the limbs as the body enters survival mode and diverts blood to essential organs. It is important to stay calm, these symptoms usually pass quickly.
- Hypothermia and hyperthermia – make yourself aware of the signs and symptoms.
- Fatal Cardiac Arrhythmia: The body is usually under the control of either the sympathetic or parasympathetic nervous system. Research suggests that during open water swimming there is a conflict as both systems are activated. This can cause sudden, and potentially fatal, cardiac arrhythmias. If you know you have any of the following cardiac conditions you should seek medical advice before open water swimming:
  - 1) Congenital or inherited long QT syndrome
  - 2) Coronary artery disease
  - 3) Myocardial hypertrophy
  - 4) Ischemic heart disease
  - 5) Pathological hypertrophy (eg. Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy).

**To reduce risk it is important to:**

- Before swimming – Do not swim if any large open wounds.  
Take caution and think of postponing if any cuts or abrasions
- During: Avoid swallowing water – novice swimmers and choppy water conditions will increase this risk.
- After: Shower as soon as possible.  
Wash kit  
Don not eat before washing the hands in soap and water.

This is an advisory document only to highlight some of the main hazards of open water swimming. We have produced this to keep members as safe as possible. Any questions arising from this please speak to a member of the committee who will do their utmost to provide answers.

Thank you

NYPtri Committee

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