

The Irish Lifesaving Foundation is an Irish Charity devoted to reducing drowning deaths in Ireland and elsewhere. New members are always welcome, no lifesaving knowledge or experience is required.  
CHY 15102 CRO 368309



## The Irish Lifesaving Foundation

Reducing death from drowning-worldwide



I've fallen into cold water  
and cannot breathe!  
**WHAT SHOULD I DO?**



### For further information please contact:

The Irish Lifesaving Foundation  
11 Iveragh Close,  
Lismore Lawn,  
Waterford City.

Tel: 051 376 773  
Mobile: 086 812 8671

[lifesavingfoundation@ireland.com](mailto:lifesavingfoundation@ireland.com)  
[www.lifesavingfoundation.ie](http://www.lifesavingfoundation.ie)



Climb out  
immediately



Float on my back



Scull, kicking my legs



Hold on to a  
buoyant object

OR

OR

### DON'T

Swim immediately or remove some clothes



The assistance of Dr Frank Golden MD PhD in writing this document is graciously acknowledged. Frank was born in Cork and was a medical graduate of UCC (1960). He spent many years in the Royal Navy researching the subject of cold water immersion, drowning, and sea survival in general. He is recognized as one of the world's leading authorities on the subject of cold water survival.

Body text by John Connolly, Art and Design work by Aoife Treacy and Suzanne Byrne.



After **3 to 5** minutes my breathing will improve and I can scull or swim to safety.



# FLOAT - DON'T SWIM

If you fall into water and cannot stand or climb out immediately, float on your back.

1. If you cannot stand up or are too far away to climb out immediately, *float on your back*, kicking your legs if necessary.
2. *Don't try swimming* until your breathing has settled down to a normal rate. This will take about 3 minutes and then you can scull or swim to safety.
3. Swimming, when breathing very rapidly, is very difficult and may cause panic. It is much better just to float for 3 minutes, allowing time for the effect of the cold on your skin to subside and your breathing to ease, before deciding what to do next.
4. Better still, look for something to hold onto that will help you stay afloat and keep your head out of the water while deciding what to do.
5. If no buoyant aids are available, float on your back, while shouting for help.
6. Air trapped inside clothing may have a buoyant effect so don't remove it. Remaining as still as possible will help keep that air trapped longer.
7. Heavy shoes or boots should be removed by kicking them off while floating, try to keep your head out of the water.
8. Your body will get used to the cold after a few minutes, and your breathing will become easier, making it possible to consider swimming to safety.
9. If possible, rather than swimming, it is better to propel yourself to safety by continuing to float on your back and simply kicking your legs. This will help to keep warm.

To avoid cold shock all swimmers, especially children, are advised to enter cold water slowly and then to remain within standing depth for a few minutes until they get used to the cold before attempting to swim.

