

Be River Safe

# Swimming In Rivers

A river swimming hole can look inviting on a warm day, but river swimming, while fun, carries hidden dangers.

Upstream storms can deepen swimming holes or increase flow, while summer months can make water too shallow for safe diving.

Drowning is quick and quiet and can happen in less than a minute, so active supervision is essential. A strong adult swimmer should supervise from the water, with extra help from the bank. Supervisors must focus solely on watching swimmers—no distractions.

Rivers are too risky for young people to supervise others. For children under five or non-swimmers, the supervisor should stay within sight and reach. Use a buddy system, with pairs watching out for each other. Everyone in the water must prioritize safety.

Never swim alone—if you run into trouble, no one will be there to help. Always tell family or friends where you're going before you head to the river, as cell service might not work there.

For a safe rescue, stay on land. If someone is caught in the current, don't go into the water; follow them along the bank and encourage them to swim toward shore. Use a branch or paddle to reach out and pull them in.

If that's not possible, alert rescue services right away. Encourage the person to float on their back, feet-first, and throw them a buoyant item to stay afloat.

Rivers can be deceptively dangerous, with strong currents that may sweep swimmers downstream, trap them against rocks, or pull them underwater, even if the surface looks calm. Unlike pools or the sea, rivers have colder water, offer less buoyancy, and present hidden hazards like rocks and strainers.

Swimming in a river current requires much more energy, and there's a risk of getting trapped or swept into rapids or falls. Always aim for a safe exit as soon as possible.

A safe swimming spot should have a gentle current, clear water, an even, visible bottom, and an easy way to get in and out. Avoid spots with muddy water, hidden debris, passing boats, rapids, or structures like bridges or weirs nearby, as these can alter currents.

If you're unsure about safety, stay out—**better to be river safe.**

Rivers change daily, so good swimmers should always check swimming holes first. Look for:

- Water depth—it may be different than expected.
- Hidden obstacles like submerged logs or debris.
- Strong currents or signs of fast-flowing water nearby.

