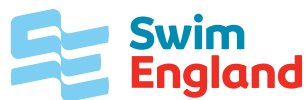


Things to consider before swimming with a health condition



For most people with a long term health condition or impairment, swimming and aquatic activity is excellent for health. It is safer to be active than to be inactive.

But there are some things you might need to consider to make your experience a safe and enjoyable one.



Considerations before swimming for certain health conditions to reduce harm or distress:

Conditions to consider	Things to consider in advance
Cancer (during or after treatment)	• Water is treated and there are strict cleaning regimes – infection risk is low but check with cancer treatment team on your personal risk of infection beforehand.
An open wound	• Wait three weeks to heal after an operation and use a waterproof dressing. • Not all wounds need be covered in the water but speak to your healthcare professional.
A stoma or colostomy bag	• Wear a plug for a stoma or waterproof seal for a bag.
Incontinence	• Getting properly fitting incontinence swim wear with inner leg cuffs to prevent accidental leakage – normal incontinence pads or other products are not suitable for water.
Poor kidney function	• You may experience increased urine production in water. • Plan out your exit from the pool to the toilets. • Wait for at least one hour after eating a big meal before swimming.
Leg swelling due to heart, lung, kidney or mobility problems	• Pressure of the water can help this. • Consider staying in shallower water if breathing is a problem.
Hearing impairments	• Ask staff to give you visual warnings if needed e.g. session time ends, etc.
Mental Health problems	• Consider a visit with someone you trust before attending to identify barriers or practical details. • Ask facility staff to support you in addressing any barriers.
Invisible disabilities	• Don't be afraid to ask staff for help – they are there to help you and individual issues can often be accommodated.



Safety considerations before you swim:

Do you have:	What you should consider in advance	How this might help you	Bring to the poolside (not in your locker)	What to do in an emergency
Diabetes	• Have a pre-swim snack if blood sugar is 'low normal' (4-7 mmol/litre). • Let pool side staff know if you might be at risk of having a hypo.	Avoid low blood sugar (often called a 'hypo').	Hypo treatments e.g. glucose tablets or gels.	Self-administer hypo treatments to increase blood sugar.
Angina (chest pain)	• Do not swim if you experience chest pain before or after you arrive.	Avoid further pain/could prevent a heart attack.	GTN spray, tablets or spare patches.	Self-administer GTN spray or tablets as prescribed.
Asthma/other Respiratory conditions	• Do not swim straight after an asthma attack. • Take any regular medications before you swim.	Prevent or relieve extreme breathlessness.	Emergency inhalers.	Self-administer inhaler medication.
Epilepsy	• Make poolside staff aware.	Allow staff to be prepared if a seizure occurs.	Consider wearing a medic alert ID or bright coloured swim cap.	Staff will be trained. If in the pool they will hold your head above water until the seizure stops.



**Practical suggestions before you swim
to reduce slips, trips, falls, distress or anxiety:**

Do you need support with:	Before you go on poolside	What you might need with you on poolside
A visual impairment	• Check staff are available to assist if needed.	Spectacles or mobility cane.
Limited mobility or balance	• Check staff are available to assist. • Ask about entry and exit hoists or lift systems.	Multi-point walking aids or frames are advisable over single point walking sticks. Poolside footwear may be used as long as it is not used outdoors.
A need to cover your body	• Check with staff about their acceptable clothing policy before arrival.	Dressing gown, rash vest or other light-weight coverings.
Dementia	• Before visiting the facility have someone help identify barriers or potential causes of distress. • Ask staff to help you with these on arrival.	Simple directions may help. Bring a friend or carer to support you if needed.

More advice on swimming with certain health conditions can be found at:

**[swimming.org/justswim/get-healthier/
swimming-with-health-conditions/](https://swimming.org/justswim/get-healthier/swimming-with-health-conditions/)**

