

## **Tri-Henley Junior Triathlon Club – Open Water Swimming Guidance**

**Location:** Shiplake College (the stretch between the boathouse landing stage and Shiplake Island (see map))

Wetsuits should be worn by all swimmers unless the water temperature is above 22 degrees.

Brightly coloured swim caps should be worn by all swimmers.

### **Risk assessment takes into account:**

1. Access and egress to the river (trips, falls, cuts, abrasions, impact with the bottom)
2. River water quality: entero-bacterial contamination, blue-green algae, leptospirosis
3. Water temperature (cold shock, hypothermia)
4. Water temperature (warm water)
5. River flow, wind, swell, waves (drowning hazard, visibility hazard, hearing impairment)
6. Underwater features (rocks, shallows, weed beds, entrapment, impact hazard)
7. Floating/suspended debris (choking hazard, impact injury)
8. Swimmer's ability/inexperience (panic)
9. Swimmer's trauma or injury
10. Visibility (of swimmers by other river users)
11. Loss of swimmer
12. Ability to navigate the swim course
13. Weather and climate (sun/sunburn)
14. Weather and climate (electrical storms (electrocution))
15. Weather and climate (mist and fog)
16. River traffic (boats, rowers, kayakers, anglers)
17. Casualty recovery

### **Who might be exposed to the hazards:**

All participants

### **What measures are in place to control the risks:**

1. Clearly defined entry/exit point  
No diving in or jumping in; instead all swimmers must sit on landing stage and slide in.
2. Water quality check (via environment agency)  
Visual check of the water prior to entry  
All swimmers briefed on hygiene and safety precautions
3. Wetsuits are compulsory for water temperatures up to 22 degrees.  
Water temperature acclimatisation before beginning the swim session  
Swimming pattern ensures close proximity to land
4. Wetsuits banned if water temperature exceeds 22 degrees.
5. Provision of drinking water at the start and finish  
Swimmers briefed on the need to keep hydrated
6. Swimming pattern ensures close proximity to land and out of the fastest flowing sections of the river.

- Flow assessed prior to entry into the water (swimming cancelled if the flow is too great)
7. Wind/swell/waves assessed before entry to the water (swim cancelled if conditions require)  
Safety vessels positioned across the course  
Swimmers briefed on conditions, and what to do, should they get into difficulty
  8. Course designed (and checked) on advice from local river users and regular river swimmers. No known risks.
  9. Course inspected prior to swimming and safety team remove any debris
  10. All participants have been assessed for their swimming ability in a swimming pool prior to being allowed to swim in the river
  11. Parents and guardians contacted (with information and risks outlined) asking for consent)
  12. Two qualified coaches are supervising the activity (one Level 2 qualified).  
Generous coach to participant ratio.  
Briefing for all swimmers before getting into the water, each time.  
Set and defined swimming pattern that all swimmers must follow (see map)
  13. All swimmers briefed on how to call for assistance
  14. Safety team positioned strategically on the course.
  15. Requirement to wear brightly coloured swim caps.  
Front and rear swimmers to swim with a brightly coloured tow float
  16. Course designed with no blind spots
  17. Full brief about the safety protocols and risks of the activity given to all participants prior to getting into the river.
  18. Head count when entering and exiting the water. Course designed with no blind spots.
  19. Guidance on how to 'site' given to all swimmers. Course designed with no blind spots.
  20. Safety canoe/SUP in the water.
  21. Suncream advised when whether is very hot.
  22. Consult weather forecast. No swimming during electrical storm and cancel swim if electrical storm approaching.  
Brief swimmers about the need for early exit should conditions require it.
  23. Swim cancelled/delayed if visibility requires, due to fog or mist.
  24. Set and defined swimming pattern that all swimmers that minimises exposure to other river users

### **Weil's Disease (low risk)**

Weil's disease is a water borne disease and is prevalent in areas frequented by rats. Symptoms are similar to flu and include pneumonia, tonsillitis, fever, headaches, jaundice and muscle ache.

To mitigate risks:

1. Cover any cuts, abrasions, bites and scratches with a waterproof plaster and/or dressing
2. After swimming in open water, wash your skin, particularly before touching your face, handling food, etc
3. Avoid rubbing your nose, mouth or eyes with your hands
4. The usual incubation period is 2 to 14 days. If you suffer any symptoms, seek medical advice immediately stating that you been swimming in open

water where Weil's disease could be prevalent. Early diagnosis is important.

College authorities informed of the swimming pattern.

Access for emergency services is planned, should the need arise.

Are the risks adequately controlled? Yes

If NO, list the additional controls and actions required (use extra paper if required):

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Checked by: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

