**Cold water immersion at 10 C**

**One Minute**

* Once you fall into cold water, you will hyperventilate for **one minute**.
* Take the time to get control of your breath and keep your head clear of the water.
* Don’t panic. It helps to know that your breathing will settle down.
* Take stock of your surroundings and plan your next steps.

**Ten Minutes**

* Next you will have approximately **ten minutes** of reasonable mobility and dexterity. Take advantage of this time to perform the tasks that will extend your survival. But don’t try to swim any long distances. You are unlikely to survive the experience.
* Remember, even though you will have some dexterity, you may not be capable of complex tasks. Experienced boaters have reported they were unable to don an immersion suit in cold water. Instead they simply became exhausted in trying.
* If possible, reduce heat loss by climbing partly onto wreckage. Even if you lack the strength to pull yourself completely clear of the water, any amount of your body removed from the water will proportionately extend your survival time.
* If you do not have a self-righting PFD, secure yourself so that your airway will be kept clear of the water when you lose consciousness. Try not to depend on your own grip to keep your airway clear. Winter sports enthusiasts who fall through ice are advised to let their arms freeze to the ice surface in order to keep their heads out of the water when they lose consciousness.

**One Hour**

* Finally, you will have **one hour** of useful consciousness.
* After **ten minutes** you will probably not have the dexterity or strength to carry out any further tasks. If you have not been able to self-rescue in this time, adopt a heat lessening posture to reduce your cooling rate.
* If you attempt to swim, you will not be able to do so efficiently—and the movement will cool you down more rapidly.
* If you are wearing a self-righting lifejacket or if you have been able to secure your airway clear of the water, you may be able to survive long enough to actually risk dying of hypothermia. Certainly you will have extended the window of opportunity in which you can be rescued.

Just because the statistics suggest that most people who succumb to cold water actually drown in the early stages of immersion, it doesn’t mean that most people who fall into cold water die in a few minutes. This is clearly not true. It isn’t possible to evaluate the actual risk of falling into cold water, because those who are recovered quickly never report the experience. So it isn’t possible to predict the percentage risk of death after falling into cold water. But if you are not wearing flotation, and not rescued or self-rescued in the first 15 to 20 minutes, the consequences will be very serious indeed.