

Safety Tips for the Across The Lake Swim

There are inherent risks associated with swimming in an open water environment.

The Across The Lake Swim Society has taken the following measures to reduce these risks:

1. The swim course is an open course and boat traffic cannot be prevented from entering the course. However, the swim course will be protected on the south (bridge) side by an RCMP patrol boat. This hinders boaters passing under the bridge from the south from inadvertently entering the swim course. The north side will be protected by two houseboats following the swim, and a flotilla of support kayakers, canoeists, and power boats.
2. The 2 km course will be flanked by 6 power boats, designated as rescue boats, each containing two life guards. These boats will be strategically positioned throughout the course. Each boat will be in radio communication with our Chief Safety Officer, who will be at the finish line, and our Head Lifeguard, who will be on the lake.
3. The course will be clearly marked with very large brightly colored buoys at the start and the finish, an inflatable arch at the finish line and possibly a hot-air balloon in City Park to help with sighting.
4. Support kayakers and canoeists have all been provided instructions on how to summon help from the lifeguard boats. They provide an additional set of eyes and ears for the lifeguards.
5. All swimmers are encouraged to document their medical conditions and allergies on their race registration. The Chief Safety Officer has a master list of athletes and their medical conditions that was provided at the time of registration.
6. Swimmers are provided with brightly colored caps that are numbered. If there is an emergency, the lifeguard will identify the injured athlete by his/her cap and number, and be in radio contact with on-shore medical support.
7. Lifeguards, the RCMP boat, and safety officials are in constant radio communication with each other. If there is an emergency on the water, medical support can be summoned immediately.
8. There is emergency medical equipment and personnel stationed at the swim finish line. BC Ambulance Service is aware of our swim, and is stationed just outside of the park perimeter.
9. The swim is held during the warmest part of the year-- average water temperature in mid-July is usually a comfortable 20-22°C.
10. Wearing of wetsuits is strongly encouraged as a strategy to reduce the risk of hypothermia. Wetsuits also provide floatation, which may enhance your swim, and provide security in case you cannot complete the swim.
11. With the continued growth of the Swim, there is no longer a single mass start. Swimmers are grouped into smaller waves of 100-175 people. Faster swimmers will be placed in the first waves to keep swimmers well spaced over the lake.
12. Swimmers are provided with pre-race information on the acrossthelakeswim.com website, as well as in their race packages that includes a review of the course and safety procedures such as how to summon a lifeguard. This information will be repeated at the start line just prior to the start of the swim.
13. We electronically track all swimmers who enter and exit the water to ensure no one is unaccounted for. All swimmers either entering the house boats for their shuttle across the lake, or starting the swim from the beach at the Old Ferry Dock beach, will be electronically identified.
14. The boating and yacht clubs on the lake have been made aware of the swim, to minimize boaters entering the swimming zone on the morning of the swim.

Here is what you can do to minimize risk:

1. Stay healthy and fit.
2. Consult your physician and follow his/her advice concerning your participation in strenuous physical activity such as swimming in open water, **especially if you have known medical conditions**.
3. Ensure that you have notified race officials of any medical conditions and allergies that you have. This should be documented on your registration. We also encourage you to speak to any of our ATLS team, the medical volunteers or the lifeguards if you have any health-related concerns.
4. Know your limitations. You should be able to swim 1000-2000 meters comfortably with or without the aid of a wetsuit.
5. If you experience chest pain, severe shortness of breath, heart palpitations, feel faint or otherwise feel unwell during competition, attempt to pull off the course if you can (to avoid being run over) and summon help from a lifeguard.
6. Train in open water in an effort to become comfortable swimming:
 - a. with and without the aid of a wetsuit;
 - b. in cold water conditions;
 - c. with groups of people in an effort to get used to swimming in a crowd;
 - d. in deep water and in rough conditions.
7. Read thoroughly the information provided to you on the acrossthelakeswim.com website and in your race package.
8. Know the course and the appropriate landmarks for sighting.
9. Be prepared to swim with crowds of people.
 - a. We recommend that faster competitive swimmers enter the first wave, or place themselves at the front of the wave they are in.
 - b. We recommend that those swimmers with more modest goals and/or those athletes who want to avoid the perils and pitfalls of group starts (e.g. pulling/kicking) position themselves at the back of the wave, and take their time entering the water. You may be rewarded with a powerful draft!
 - c. We recommend that swimmers with any anxiety undertaking this swim have a dedicated kayaker or canoeist(s) with an extra life jacket follow them across the lake.
10. Ensure you warm up prior to race start. We recommend getting into the water near the swim start at least 10-15 minutes prior to the swim start to get used to the water temperature, to warm up your wetsuit, and do some easy swimming. This will minimize the sudden cardiac load, loosen up your shoulders, make sure your goggles are fitting well, and allow you to acclimatize to the lots of other swimmers doing the same thing.

Tips for Open Water Swimming

1. Know the course. The person swimming ahead of you may not be traveling in the right direction!
2. Swim in a straight line. This will save you time and energy.
3. Identify landmarks to sight off. This will help you swim in the right direction.
4. Occasionally “pop up” to get your bearings. Some swimmers find it helpful to pop up every 8-10 strokes. Practice this technique in your open water sessions.
5. Wear well-fitted goggles to aid sighting and avoid leakage. All brands of goggles will “fog-up” at one point or another. You can purchase anti-fog solutions or simply “spit” in them. You may also experience “leakage” during your swim. Practice managing these scenarios in your open water practices.
6. If you are not a strong or experienced swimmer, improve your swim fitness and efficiency by joining a Masters or Triathlon Swim Club to work on stroke technique.
7. Relax as much as possible and enjoy the clean water and beautiful scenery! Although there will be many competitive swimmers out there, this is, above all, a fun and family event, so, remember to have fun!

