# Shallow Water Blackout Awareness Meeting Kit

## WHAT’S AT STAKE

Shallow Water Blackout Awareness refers to the knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with shallow water blackout, a potentially life-threatening condition that can occur during underwater breath-holding activities. It involves being aware of the factors that contribute to shallow water blackout, such as hyperventilation and extended breath-holding, and understanding the symptoms and dangers associated with it. Promoting safety practices, such as having a buddy system, avoiding hyperventilation, and ensuring proper supervision and training during water-related activities.

## WHAT’S THE DANGER

**KEY HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH SHALLOW WATER BLACKOUT**

- Loss of consciousness: Shallow water blackout can cause a sudden loss of consciousness while underwater, leading to drowning and potential death. This occurs due to a lack of oxygen reaching the brain.
- Lack of warning signs: Unlike other water-related dangers, shallow water blackout often happens without warning signs or discomfort. Individuals may feel capable of holding their breath for an extended period, unaware of the imminent risk.
- Difficulty self-rescuing: When someone loses consciousness underwater, they are unable to perform self-rescue actions. This makes it challenging for affected individuals to reach the surface or call for help, increasing the risk of drowning.
- Lack of awareness by others: Shallow water blackout can go unnoticed by others nearby, especially if there is no proper supervision or safety measures in place.

- Brain damage and injuries: Prolonged oxygen deprivation during a blackout can result in brain damage or other severe injuries. The longer a person remains unconscious underwater, the greater the risk of permanent harm.
- Lack of oxygen detection equipment: In many cases, there is a lack of oxygen detection equipment in recreational or non-professional water settings. This makes it difficult to detect and respond to shallow water blackout incidents promptly.
- Increased risk-taking behavior: Individuals who are not adequately informed about shallow water blackout may engage in riskier breath-holding activities, further amplifying the potential hazards.

# HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

**PREVENTITIVE MEASURES RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO SHALLOW WATER BLACKOUTS**

- **Prevention:** The best way to deal with shallow water blackout is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Avoid prolonged breath-holding underwater, especially without proper training and supervision. Do not hyperventilate before breath-holding activities, as it can lower the body's natural urge to breathe.
- **Buddy System:** Always engage in water activities with a buddy or have someone nearby who can monitor you. A buddy can recognize the signs of shallow water blackout and provide immediate assistance if needed.
- **Education and Awareness:** Educate yourself about shallow water blackout, its causes, and the risks involved. Understand the importance of regular breathing and the body's natural urge to breathe.
- **Recognize the Signs:** Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of shallow water blackout, such as disorientation, loss of motor control, and loss of consciousness. Be vigilant and attentive to any unusual behavior in yourself or others engaged in breath-holding activities.
- **Emergency Response:** If you suspect someone is experiencing

shallow water blackout, initiate a rescue immediately. Remove the person from the water as quickly and safely as possible. Check for breathing and responsiveness. If the person is not breathing, begin CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) immediately and call for emergency medical assistance.

- **Seek Professional Training:** If you participate in breath-holding activities, consider receiving proper training from qualified instructors who can teach you safe techniques and provide guidance on how to avoid shallow water blackouts.

**BEST SHALLOW WATER BLACKOUT PREVENTION MEASURES**

- **Avoid Hyperventilation:** Do not engage in excessive or prolonged hyperventilation (rapid and deep breathing) before breath-holding. Hyperventilation can lower carbon dioxide levels in the body and suppress the urge to breathe, increasing the risk of blackout without warning signs.
- **Proper Training and Education:** Receive proper training and education on breath-holding techniques, safety protocols, and the risks associated with shallow water blackout. Understand the importance of breath-holding limits and recognizing your body’s signals for air.
- **Buddy System:** Always have a reliable buddy present during breath-holding activities in water. The buddy can monitor your condition and provide assistance if an emergency occurs.
- **Time Limits:** Establish and adhere to safe breath-holding time limits. Do not push yourself beyond your capabilities, and gradually increase your breath-holding duration over time with proper training.
- **Surface Recovery:** When practicing breath-holding in water, ensure you surface well before the point of discomfort or breathlessness. Give yourself plenty of time to breathe and recover before attempting another breath-hold.
- **Adequate Rest and Recovery:** Allow sufficient time for rest and recovery between breath-holding attempts. This helps ensure your body has enough oxygen and reduces the risk of oxygen deprivation.

- **Continuous Supervision:** Ensure that water activities involving breath-holding are supervised by qualified individuals who are knowledgeable about shallow water blackout and its prevention.
- **Equipment and Safety Measures:** If engaging in freediving or underwater activities, use appropriate safety equipment, such as snorkels, masks, and fins. Familiarize yourself with their proper use and maintenance.

# FINAL WORD

The best prevention for shallow water blackouts is awareness, education, and responsible behavior. Prioritize safety and the safety of everyone when participating in breath-holding activities in the water.

Shallow water blackout awareness plays a significant role in ensuring the safety, well-being, and enjoyment of individuals engaging in breath-holding activities in the water. It empowers people with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, prevent accidents, and respond effectively in emergency situations.