



## Longfellow's WHALE Tales

### Water Habits Are Learned Early

**Dear Parent/Caregiver,**

You might be surprised to know that today's Longfellow's WHALE Tales water safety lesson included a topic more commonly associated with snow, cold and ice: hypothermia.

Hypothermia happens when the body loses heat and a person's body temperature drops faster than it can warm up. If a person experiencing hypothermia doesn't get help, their heart and other organs aren't able to work as they are supposed to. This is very dangerous and can even be life-threatening.

So why are we concerned about hypothermia in a program that has mainly been about swimming and warm weather water activities so far? There are a few reasons why.

- **Even in the summer**, many bodies of water such as lakes, rivers and oceans can stay at cooler temperatures. When your child spends a long period of time in water that is cooler than their body temperature (about 98.6° F), they can lose heat rapidly, leading to hypothermia.
- **And let's face it**, kids are known for their boundless energy for swimming and water play. It's not uncommon for a child to not realize when they are getting too cold and could use a break to warm up.
- **Add in wind and wet clothing** on a day that's more mild than hot, and body heat can quickly be lost, even when a child is out of the water.
- **If you like to boat or fish together**, you may also be in situations where an accident could lead to sudden immersion in cold water.

As your child's caregiver and water watcher, you can help prevent hypothermia by doing regular check-ins with your child during water activities, even in warm weather. Encourage them to take breaks and warm up when you see it's needed—ideally before shivering sets in!

We also encourage you to participate in water safety, first aid and CPR/AED training that includes hypothermia as a topic. That way you'll know how to best help if you notice someone is having signs of hypothermia. You can find a list of American Red Cross classes by visiting [redcross.org/watersafety](https://www.redcross.org/watersafety).

With warm regards,