

“It was cold, but beautiful” - Ice cold women swimming

The practice of cold-water and wild swimming in natural environments is an increasingly popular activity. When looking at the number of female members in ice swimming groups in Norway, but also with regard to biographical literature about wild swimming, it is obvious: Especially women seem to be attracted to swimming in natural waters despite the lower temperatures. In this paper, we want to present some of the reasons and motifs for especially women to go into ice-cold waters, swim in dark lakes, or swim in heavy waves in the ocean. Both text analysis of biographic material, as well as qualitative interviews with active ice swimming women, have been used in this inquiry. The results show that there is a combination of different factors: both mental and physical health, social aspects as well as awareness of the surrounding nature are important. Additionally, mastering the challenges and the risks of cold water swimming support women's self-confidence and their addiction to this activity.