

# What Are some Benefits of Swimming?

~Coach Sarah Lovely

With Olympic Trials around the corner, everyone wants to be an Olympic swimmer. Luckily, you don't have to be an Olympic swimmer to benefit from the sport. People of all ages, from all backgrounds, and with various levels of experience can benefit from swimming. Swimming is one of the few sports you can do from a young age and all the way up into your 90s. You may have heard that experts recommend adults get 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week. Kids need a minimum of 60 minutes of aerobic exercise each day. Swimming is an excellent way to work your entire body and cardiovascular system.

Why not jump in? It's not too late to gain from the hidden benefits of swimming. Swimming is perfect for your mental health and physical health. Water is a low-impact sport that provides more resistance than dryland exercises and it has a therapeutic cooling effect on the body that contribute to its many benefits. It truly is the perfect sport. Here are some of the sports less obvious benefits:

## 1. Swimming Improves Social Well Being

Swimming is very much a social sport. Swimmers of all ages can take classes together, train together, or work with a coach in the pool. Even if you have a pool at home, it is where you gather with your friends and family. A study revealed exercising and socializing together leads to improved mental health. Participants in the study had lower levels of anxiety and depression than their peers did.

## 2. Swimming Teaches Goal Orientation

Swimmers become goal-oriented in their personal and professional lives. Swimming gives kids and adults something to strive for. Whether it is kicking a kickboard across the pool, improving a lap time, or recovering from an injury with water rehabilitation, setting goals and achieving them is the key. The skills swimmers learn in the pool to realize and achieve such goals are skills that can and will be used out of the pool as well.

## 3. Kids Who Swim Become Active Adults

Swimming is an important activity to help combat the childhood obesity rates, and it is fun too. Swimming has all the three elements of physical activity recommended to keep kids healthy: endurance, strength, and flexibility. Swimming provides kids with the tools, skills, and dedication to maintain healthier lives as adults.

## 4. Swimming Makes You Smarter

Regular exercise, such as swimming, improves memory function and thinking skills. This is good not only for the classroom and work, but it is beneficial for us as we age too. Regular exercise reduces inflammation and insulin resistance in the brain, which fosters new brain cell

growth. Swimming also improves mood, anxiety, and stress, which increases the brain's ability to think more efficiently. Swimming stimulates young children's senses and is thought to improve brain and emotional development. As babies develop mobility functions and breathing becomes deeper, they are encouraged to make sound. This improves communication and aids in language and speech development. Swimming also supports a child's mind/body connection as studies have shown that during exercise a child's mind is stimulated, promoting further brain development and intelligence.

## **5. Swimming Teaches Team-Building Skills**

Swimmers on teams or in swim classes have better team-building skills. Swimmers learn to work together, to encourage each other, to communicate, and to become leaders. All of these skills translate into effective leaders in adulthood. Team-building skills encourage collaboration, goal orientation, inspiration, strategy development, and coordination, which all result in successful careers and professional relationships. Swimming, while often thought to be a solo activity, is actually a great social activity. It introduces you and your child to others with similar interests and lifestyles. Children enjoy the interaction with other children where they find a common ground, solidifying a valuable social engagement outside of school.

## **6. Swimming Burns More Calories than Jogging**

When you compare swimming to running, you can burn more calories swimming laps around the pool than you can running laps for an hour. One hour of vigorous lap swimming can burn as much as 715 calories. The same amount of time running at 5 mph burns only 606 calories.

## **7. Swimming Slows Down Aging**

There is no secret pill to living longer, but the pool is like the fountain of youth. Regular swimming can delay the effects of aging by reducing blood pressure, increasing muscle mass, improving oxygen and blood flow to the brain, and increasing cardiovascular health. Swimming can also improve physical strength and balance in seniors. Seniors who suffer from joint pains can hit the pool to increase flexibility and to reduce joint inflammation. Lastly, this low-impact sport is easier on the body.

## **9. Swimmers are More Confident**

Swimming is a confidence-building sport. Early evidence from an ongoing study out of Griffith University in Australia revealed that young swimmers are more confident than their non-swimming peers. This is also true for competitive and non-competitive adult swimmers. Swimming teaches confidence in the pool and in the open water, which translates to confidence on land as well. Children can often be fearful of water if they are not sensitized to it. Overcoming this fear can be extremely empowering, boosting confidence and self-esteem. This newfound confidence can extend to social situations, which allows your child to interact with peers, developing their social skills and providing another self-esteem boost. Improving self-esteem instills a positive attitude towards physical activity which assists later in life.

## **10. Minimal Gear**

Swimming is one of the best sports, as it does require minimal gear! You can work out with only a swimsuit and goggles!

It's never too early or too late to start swimming. Jump in and have fun. Your life, health, and well-being depend on it.

## **11. Support a stress-free lifestyle**

Swimming is a great stress reliever. It clears the mind, provides routine and fosters a balanced lifestyle. Scientifically, swimming is proven to increase endorphins (and other mood-boosting chemicals) in the brain.

### **Final thought**

Overall swimming, while fantastic for physical health and wellbeing, has invaluable mental health benefits. As children grow and develop, the positive mental effects of swimming begin to align, if not exceed the physical benefits of swimming.

At SSAN we believe in all of our swimmers in and out of the pool hopefully passing on our knowledge and love of the sport to the next generation. "We will provide every swimmer an opportunity to improve their swimming skills and achieve success at their level of ability."

~SSAN mission