

WHY SWIM?

Swimming is considered the ideal activity for developing muscular and skeletal growth by many physicians and pediatricians. Why do doctors like it so much?

- Swimming develops high quality aerobic endurance, the most important key to physical fitness. In other sports an hour of practice may yield as little as 10 minutes of meaningful exercise. Age group swimming teams use every precious minute of practice time developing fitness and teaching skills.
- Swimming does a better job in proportional muscular development by using all the body's major muscle groups. No other sport does this as well.
- Swimming enhances children's natural flexibility (at a time when they ordinarily begin to lose it) by exercising all of their major joints through a full range of motion.
- Swimming helps develop superior coordination because it requires combinations of complex movements of all parts of the body, enhancing harmonious muscle function, grace, and fluidity of movement.
- Swimming is the most injury-free of all children's sports.
- Swimming is a sport that will bring kids fitness and enjoyment for life. Participants in Master's Swimming programs are still training and racing well into their 80's.

In addition to physical development, children can develop greater intellectual competence by participating in a guided program of physical activity. Learning and using swimming skills engages the thinking processes. As they learn new techniques, children must develop and plan movement sequences. They improve by exploring new ideas. They learn that greater progress results from using their creative talents. Self-expression can be just as much physical as intellectual. Finally their accomplishments in learning and using new skills contribute to a stronger self image.

"Preparation for Life" by Phil Hansel

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Not everything we do in life is a pleasant experience. Not everything we do is beneficial. Not everything we do is productive. Not everything is a nurturing, loving experience. Life is full of negative, destructive experiences. Rejection, defeat and failure surround all of us. The trick is to be prepared to deal with this side of life and learn to overcome discouragement.

I have always felt that the great value of swimming as a sport is that it prepares one for life. The total swimming experience is made up of people, attitudes, beliefs, work habits, fitness, health, winning and losing, and so much more. Swimming is a cross section of lifetime experiences. It can provide so many learning situations. A swimmer learns to deal with pressure and stress, sometimes self-imposed, sometimes applied by

others. One learns to deal with success and failure. One learns teamwork and discipline.

Swimming becomes a self-achievement activity. There is only one person in the water in a given lane in any race. The responsibility for performance ultimately lies with the individual. How well the individual has prepared physically and mentally to a large degree will determine the performance level.

Many swimming experiences can be of the disruptive, discouraging type. But at least a young swimmer learns that this is part of life, and the swimmer must learn to cope.

By learning how to handle frustration and disappointment, the young swimmer gains confidence. The swimmer learns dedication and commitment. Through perseverance, a swimmer learns to overcome adversity. All of these experiences tend to develop an individual who is better able to handle life's hardships and face problems.

As coaches and parents, we tend to preach that hard work will lead to victory. We preach that clean living and proper training such as diet, sleep and regular attendance at workouts will lead to winning. Though in the long run for a productive successful life, these are probably truthful concepts that don't always work in short term situations.

We have all been in situations where a bigger, more gifted person with poor work habits is the victor in race after race. Or we've known others who never seem to study, yet get good grades. We've known business people who never seem to lift a finger, yet for one reason or another, they close deal after deal.

These things just are not fair. Yet this is one of the valuable lessons that swimmers learn: "Life is not fair." We don't all start out in life with the same physical, mental, emotional and financial resources. In that respect, "Life is not fair."

A swimmer must learn what is fair for one is not necessarily fair for another. A swimmer learns we are all different and each individual controls his or her own destiny. A swimmer learns to emphasize given talents and skills. A swimmer learns to improve on a regular basis. By not setting limits and restrictions, this improvement will surely lead to success. A swimmer learns if he or she does their best, then there are no failures. A swimmer learns to set realistic goals. Once a goal is reached, then new goals must be established. A swimmer learns that effort becomes an individual crusade. If the ultimate goal is an Olympic gold medal, then with the proper talent, dedication, belief and support, all swimmers believe it can be done.

This is the positive achievement side of swimming that I like so much. Through experience in swimming, our young people learn attitudes and habits that will remain with them throughout the rest of their life. Most swimmers learn to be "can do" people.

Generally, these positive attitudes, belief in self and solid work habits will produce a terrific adult. Our society and our world are enriched by these former swimmers as they become adults. Because of their training, they handle life with a smile. They contribute time and energy to others in every way imaginable.

We can be proud of what swimming contributes to this world. Though "life is not fair," a swimmer knows how to deal with that and can achieve a balance. For the most part, former swimmers grow up to be ordinary people, but they always have that extra plus from the swimming experience. We are different and can be proud of it.

Philosophy of Competition

SwimStrongsville engages in a multi-level competition program with USA Swimming that, like our training program, attempts to provide challenging, yet success-oriented competitive situations for swimmers of all ages and abilities. The following policies outline our philosophy:

1. We emphasize competition with oneself. Winning ribbons, medals, or trophies is not our main goal. Even if the swimmer finishes first, but has swum poorly in comparison to his/her own past performances, he/she is encouraged to do better. The individual's improvement is our primary objective.
2. Sportsmanlike behavior is just as important as an improved performance. All the coaches teach swimmers how to behave like a champion when the swimmer has both a "good" and a "bad" swim. Respect for officials, congratulations to other competitors, encouragement to teammates, determined effort, and mature attitudes are examples of behaviors praised and rewarded by the SwimStrongsville coaching staff.
3. A swimmer is praised for improving his/her stroke or time. It is the coach's job to offer constructive criticism of a swimmer's performance. It is the parent's responsibility to provide love and encouragement that bolster the swimmer's confidence along the way.

Swimmers are taught to set realistic, yet challenging, goals for meets and to relate those goals to practice in order to direct their training efforts.

Swimmers are prepared and encouraged to compete in all swimming events, distances, and strokes. This policy promotes versatility and encourages the swimmer to explore his potential in the wide range of events offered in competitive swimming. Oftentimes, a swimmer's "best" stroke changes as they mature and his/her body goes through physical changes.

Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Swim Meets But Were Afraid To Ask (or didn't know what to ask)

Swim meets are a great family experience! They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. You get to watch your child swim and see how much he/she has improved from all the hard work he/she has put in at practice. Your swimmer gets to visit with his/her friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams.

Special Parent's Note: The pool area is usually very warm. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly!

Before the meet starts:

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information emailed to you.
2. Upon arrival, find the "swimmers room". This will usually be a large room like a gymnasium. Find a place to put your swimmer's bag and towel(s). The swimmers usually sit in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
3. Find the check-in place and either you or your swimmer will need to check themselves in. Check for special posted instructions in the area. Usually one will need to circle the swimmer's name or # before each swimmer's name, in each event they are swimming that day. If this is not done, the swimmer will not be allowed to swim that event. The reason for this check-in procedure is so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet.
4. Once "checked in", write each event number on your swimmer's hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen for the announcer to be calling.
5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. Swimmer's bodies are just like cars on a cold day; he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her towels are and sit there until their first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
8. According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet, should be referred to the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
9. A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. Heat sheets list all the swimmers in each event. When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT".

During the meet:

1. It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (they should be in ink on the swimmer's hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
2. A swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course". Swimmers should report with their cap and goggles. Generally, girl's events are odd-numbered and boy's events are even-numbered.
3. The clerk of course area has several rows of chairs. Each row represents a heat of the race. Each row contains a chair representing each lane of the pool. For example, a 6-lane pool will have 6 chairs in each row at the clerk of course. The people running the clerk of course will tell the swimmer where to sit. The swimmers move up from the last row to the first row and then it will be their turn to walk to the blocks. Usually there are at least 4-8 heats of each event.
4. The swimmer swims their race.
5. After each swim the swimmer should go immediately to their coach. The coach will discuss the swim with the swimmer including positive comments, suggestions for improvement, praise, and stroke technique.
6. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
 - a. Go meet your child in the swimmer's room and tell him/her how proud you are of them and what a great job he/she did! Make sure your child knows that, win or lose; you love him/her and are not disappointed in them. If your child has a poor race, the important thing is not to dwell on it. You should move the swimmer on to something good. "All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?"
 - b. This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light and healthy to eat.
 - c. The swimmer now waits until his/her next event is called and then starts over with the clerk of course procedure.
7. When a swimmer has completed all of his /her events he/she and their parents get to go home. Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and he/she is not there.

What to take to the meet:

1. Most important: Swim suit, team swim cap and goggles.
2. Towels- pack at least two.
3. Something for your swimmer to sit on. For example, an extra towel, old blanket, or sleeping bag.
4. Sweat pants and hoodie or t-shirt to wear over the swimsuit between races.
5. A deck of cards, coloring books, travel games, or something fun to do with friends between races.