**What to expect at Swim Team!**

Welcome to swim team!! School’s out, the weather is warm, the pool is open, and you’re ready to release the kids upon the neighborhood! A great place to be weekday mornings is down at the pool for Sharks practice.

Our VCH Sharks is a fun, semi-competitive swim team that welcomes residents and non-residents. We average around 80 swimmers the past few years, from age 4-18. In the 2016 season we are competing in the Gateway Franklin Division with the following teams: Robinwood, MAC (Missouri Athletic Club,) Castle Pines, Royal Acres and Brentwood. We will have 2 home meets, and a two-day conference meet at the end of the season. All meet dates and locations are on the webpage: [www.vchsharks.com](http://www.vchsharks.com)

Our division swim meets are fun, with a competitive edge. The swimmers truly love to compete, and it’s a joy to watch them give it their all and cheer for their friends and team. We award ribbons liberally, celebrating personal bests and team wins. Ultimately, the best win for all our swimmers is their own improvement over the season. They will definitely come out of the season faster and more confident than they went in!

**Here are some FAQs for the season:**

**Will my kids get in the water every day?** – Yes. Unless it’s raining hard (or there’s audible thunder) the kids will get in the pool. Even if it’s chilly, so send towels and warm clothes for after practice.

**What should they bring to practice?** – Swimsuit (one piece preferred for girls,) goggles, towel, (and wear sunscreen.) Items they may want also: water bottle, shoes, swim cap.

**What shouldn’t they bring to practice?** – Any glass containers/dishes, pool toys, electronics (make sure phones will stay dry.)

**Can I watch my kids practice?** – Of course! We ask spectators (including younger siblings) to either remain outside the pool fence (there’s a great brick wall to sit on by the deep end) or remain on the picnic tables under the covered area by the playground. This allows the swimmers to concentrate.

**What will my swimmers do at practice?** – They will swim laps…and laps…and more laps! Our youngest swimmers (6 & under) will spend one-on-one time with coaches and assistants learning basic strokes and building confidence and endurance. Our older swimmers (7 & up) will practice the strokes they know by swimming laps, learn new strokes in small groups (in and out of the water,) practice more laps, dive off the blocks, and may practice starts. The oldest groups (11 & up) will also practice turns and fly-over starts.

**How do I know if practice is cancelled?** – Through text message, Remind101 and email, the parent rep will notify all swim families if practice is cancelled at least one hour before practice start time. Please make sure your phone and email information remains current. Practice is only cancelled for extreme weather (pouring rain and/or storms.) We will still hold practice on cool days or in light rain. The coaches may call a “dry land practice” on iffy weather days; this will also be announced before practice begins.

**What is dry-land practice?** – Swimmers will not get into the pool on these days. They will participate in activities on the tennis courts (pushups, sit-ups, games, calisthenics) or run 1-2 miles through the neighborhood (older kids.) On these days (announced ahead of time) the kids should dress for activity and wear (or bring) running shoes.

**Do I need a special suit to be on the team?** -- No. The VCH Sharks logo swimsuit can be purchased through B&B Aquatics, but it is not mandatory. Our team colors are black and red if your swimmer wants to coordinate. We do encourage a team swim cap and you can purchase those at practice. For the girls, please do have them wear a one-piece suit. Two piece suits can be troublesome with dives and turns. For the boys, they eventually prefer the tight fitting, knee length suits over the loose trunks. They are faster and stay on better during dives and turns.

**What if my swimmer has to miss a practice?** – There are no mandatory practice requirements, so if your swimmer misses practice it’s okay. If you are going to be out for more than a day or two, please let your parent rep know (camps, vacations, etc…) Some swimmers will attend a different age group practice if their normal practice time conflicts with a summer camp. This is okay if cleared ahead of time.

**How much experience do the coaches have?** – All of our coaches have competitive swim experience at the high school level, and some have competed on USA Swimming teams (Rockwood, Parkway, etc…) They all have been on swim teams since they were knee-high, and have been serving as assistant coaches and head coaches for 5+ years. The coaches are all lifeguard certified (including CPR/BLS.)

**How far will my kids have to swim?** – The goal for our newest swimmers is 25 yds non-stop (length of the pool.) That’s the goal, and at first they may use the lane lines a lot for rests. During meets, 10 and under compete in 25 yd swims. 11 & up compete in 50 yd swims (turns at one end.)

**Do my swimmers have to use the blocks?** – The goal is for all our swimmers to start off the blocks. Our coaches are great at coaxing the little ones onto the blocks, and eventually, they all do jump off by the end of the season.

**What if my swimmer can’t dive?** – That’s ok! A good number of our younger swimmers are still working on dives (either off or on the blocks.) The coaches will teach dive techniques and encourage all the swimmers to work up to diving off the blocks.

**How will my swimmer learn what to do?** – During swim team practice the focus is on repetition and building endurance. New strokes will be taught during short sessions, then the swimmers will use laps, drills and starts/turns to build their skill with the strokes. The coaches will monitor the swimmers from the deck, using audio and visual instruction for individuals. (The 6 & unders focus on learning strokes, learning swim skills and more play at first; coaches and assistants DO spend time in the water with the youngest group.)

**How come the coaches aren’t in the water?** – Think of soccer practice, baseball practice, basketball practice, etc…The coaches coach. They watch the players as a whole, direct small groups, give corrective advice and encourage teamwork. They don’t play the game with the kids. The same is true for swim coaches. They can see the swimmers better from above and are able to catch stroke errors, or give some encouraging advice. If needed, they will pull a swimmer out of the water (or to the edge of the pool) to have them practice moves on dry land where they can focus on the motions without worrying about breathing.

**What if my swimmer needs some one-on-one instruction?** – This is a great time to communicate with your coach about scheduling a swim lesson after practices. Our coaches often offer 45 min sessions after practices where they will work 1:1 with a swimmer for a nominal charge. You can email your coaches (addresses on the webpage) or speak with them between practices at the pool.

**Do I have to stay and watch my swimmer practice?** – No. Not only are the coaches there, but a parent rep will be at all practices also (usually Kellie) so your swimmer will be supervised during their practice time. If your swimmer arrives before, or stays after, their practice they can sit on the picnic benches inside the pool area while not in the water. *\*\* Kids who exit the pool to play on the playground or go elsewhere are NOT supervised. We do not have a sign-in/sign-out procedure and do not monitor parking lot pick-up. \*\**

**What should I do for my swimmer during practice?** – Some of our younger swimmers like having mom and dad there to watch and that’s GREAT! As a spectator, please just spectate. If you have any concerns or questions during your swimmer’s practice, wait until practice is over to speak with your coach. Be ready to encourage and support your swimmer when practice is over! It’s tiring, and they work hard. Sometimes it’ll seem like they’re “just not getting it” and that’s okay. It takes time and repetition to master a new stroke or get rid of bad habits. Just keep encouraging them to swim, swim, swim! Remember, swimming is just as hard aerobically as soccer or gymnastics…and these kids are holding their breath while they do it!

**Swimmer Expectations:**

Come to practice willing to learn, work hard, and have fun. Please be prepared with the right equipment; suit, goggles, and possibly a cap. While swimming definitely focuses on the individual, it is still a team sport. Team spirit, sportsmanship, and a positive attitude are essential. Keep in mind that you will get what you give. Improvement is directly proportionate to your attendance at practice.

**Behavior Standards:**

It is a privilege to participate in organized sports, as with any privilege come responsibilities. These are your responsibilities as a swimmer for the VCH Swim Team. At meets and practice your behavior should exemplify sportsmanship, class, and respect at all times, especially in the bullpen. You actions should not be offensive, insulting, or condescending to anyone, including other swimmers, parents, coaches, or officials. It is important to realize that as a team we have an image in the community and in the league. This means that you must always be aware of how your actions and language will affect this image. At practice you must come prepared to work hard, expand your comfort level, and try new things that can help you become a better swimmer. You must keep in mind that you are now a part of something that is greater than yourself. Others are depending on your talents and actions to help us all become better as a TEAM. Failing to uphold the behavior standards of the team may result in your removal from the team.