

News For

SWIM PARENTS

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Should Age Group Swimmers do Weight Training?

“My daughter is 10 years old and not very strong, should she be involved with a weight training program at this age?”

Power is critical to swimming performance. But more important, stroke technique must first be developed before power can be effectively applied in the water. Just as with a good training program, improving power should be done progressively. For this reason, a swimmer should not begin a weight training program until he/she reaches the age of twelve or older.

To be sure, however, there are more serious reasons to delay the incorporation of a weight training program. The most important is the fact that the musculature is not fully developed until a youngster reaches at least 12 years of age. Muscle fiber size is significantly smaller in the young swimmer, so the amount of force generated is much less to begin with. This would suggest that the supporting structure (i.e. muscle and bone) needed for weight training is not available in the preadolescent. Potentially, strength/power training could lead to injury and an imbalance in musculature development.

The young swimmer (age 12 and under) can achieve strength/power gains if involved in a training program. However, note that strength/power gains also result from swimming alone. Swimming can be considered an isokinetic type of training, which is sufficient for the age grouper. In swimming alone, power will naturally improve, stroke technique can be emphasized and adaptations in the energy system will occur. Strength/power training programs at this age should be limited to use of the dry land surgical tubing or use of a swim bench. These are essentially isokinetic and the potential of injury is minimized.