

CHILDREN AND SWIMMING

What Parent's Should Know Going In

Children are not born with fear; it is created and developed. A child does not know that things are dangerous or could cause them harm unless it is told or taught to them.

In swimming, a child does not know what "drowning" means. Children only comprehend the warning tone of voice and the concerned or worried expression on your face.

Learning to swim is like any other new experience whether it is a babysitter, daycare, going to school, a doctor, or any change of plans or routines. *It is an unknown activity and it involves an unknown person!*

Caution and hesitancy that a child may initially show at swimming lessons is no different than is expected or experienced in any other new situation. The tears or clinging can be easily overcome by loving parental support and enthusiasm!

KEY POINT

Swimming needs to be re-taught and reinforced continually. Only swim skills that are remembered can save a life.

The most important thing we need to remember is that they are *children*, not little adults. With patience, care, concern, and parental enthusiasm, children can learn to enjoy safe swimming, and water safety.

A baby needs to learn how to balance, gain muscle control and strength, coordination, and how to move safely by means of constant practice when learning to sit, stand, walk or run. Children learn to ride a bike by slowly progressing from a scooter or Big Wheel, to tricycle, to training wheels, to a mini bike, until after many years, finally riding with no hands on a 10-speed bicycle. The same concept applies to swimming.

Learning to swim is a gradual, on-going learning process based on practice, developmental levels, reinforcement, body composition, and physics. Like any

other safety concern, swimming needs to be re-taught and reinforced continually. Only swim skills that are remembered can save a life.

Some of the items below may affect your child's behavior:

- › Separation from the parent
- › Moods and developmental levels that affect learning such as:
 - ✓ Fatigue
 - ✓ Hunger
 - ✓ Loss of Control
 - ✓ Feeling Rushed
 - ✓ Grouchiness
 - ✓ Irritability
- › The instructor is a new person and may possibly look a bit weird with wet hair and little clothing.
- › Sounds echo around a pool area and tend to be louder
- › Developmental stages that affect behavior including but not limited to:
 - ✓ Independent stage
 - ✓ Whiny stage
 - ✓ Bossy stage
 - ✓ Clingy stage
- › The pool is *HUGE* in relation to the child's size
- › The water tickles when it gets in their eyes and ears
- › The air and water temperature are not as warm as their bathroom at home during bath time
- › There is nothing to hold onto when they lie on their backs
- › No matter how fast they 'run', they can't move quickly
- › Natural inborn instinct is to hold their breath (not to blow it out) when their face is immersed
- › Water is neither as firm nor supportive as the ground

Submerging

Submerging is a crucial activity in learning to swim. We request that you support your child and child's teacher during this stage of aquatic development. When a parent says to their child, "you do not have to go under water today," we are not working as a team. The child learns that going under is a bad thing. We respectfully request that you encourage your child to try to do his/her best. Our teachers will acknowledge your child's concern in a calm and loving manner. Set the stage for success with communication, encouragement, and positive reinforcement (treat). When we work as a team, children thrive.