

"GUIDELINES FOR SAFER SWIMMING"

1. As we age, changes occur in our bodies. The greatest changes seem to happen as we pass 60 (eg strength, flexibility), but our risk of heart disease starts early ie 30 years for males and 40 for females.
2. Family history of heart disease may identify genetic factors not controllable by simply a healthy lifestyle. The younger the family members were when they first showed signs of heart disease, the greater your risk. See your doctor.
3. Smoking related deaths are the highest single identifiable group. We all know the risks – lung disease, heart disease, circulatory problems, cancer etc. The health benefits are huge for cutting down or even better, quitting. See your doctor and good luck. It's just another challenge!
4. Raised blood pressure may also be in the family. Symptoms often are not apparent. Get checked annually - if it is not well managed, it can lead to serious problems. Some anti-hypertensive drugs (Beta blockers) decrease heart rate and may affect performance. They may also mask the effort you are putting in! Breath holding may raise blood pressure and too hot/too cold water may also affect it.
5. Raised cholesterol levels. Again a silent killer. You may enjoy a healthy diet/lifestyle and still have raised blood levels. This can lead to blocked arteries and is dangerous. Get it checked.
6. Diabetes Type I. If you are an insulin dependent diabetic, you must ensure you are fully educated on the effects of exercise on your insulin levels and take all possible steps to safely manage it. A Medic Alert bracelet/necklace allows quick identification if necessary. We are not permitted to administer medication, this has to be done by a health professional or yourself.
7. Diabetes Type II. Non-insulin dependent diabetics need also to familiarise themselves with management of insulin levels. Exercise, diet and weight control are 3 ways to help maintain safe blood sugar levels. High blood glucose can lead to blindness, renal disease, heart disease, poor circulation etc. Do not ignore itanother silent one!
8. Overweight. Swimming can only help weight loss if your diet is right. Don't try fad diets. See your doctor/dietician for advice on healthy eating plans.
9. Irregular exerciser? Are you the type who believes that exercise has to hurt to be good for you? Maybe you remember how fit you used to be? Or do you have breaks and then try to catch up with the regulars? If so, you are at risk! If you have had a break from exercising or only train irregularly you must ease into it gradually and not overstress your body. If you are panting and finding it hard to catch your breath....you are working too hard! Know your safe training heart rate (see your doctor). There are also general guidelines at the pool – ask the coach. Learn how to count your heart rate and to recognise when you are overdoing it.....before it is too late. A safe heart rate for someone else may not be safe for you!
10. Raised stress levels. Leave your troubles poolside and enjoy your session. Stress causes physiological changes in the body and too much stress can be harmful. Learn how to manage it. See your doctor.
11. Respiratory problems. Asthma – should be managed by your doctor. Old medication regimes may no longer be the best. Regular updates with your doctor are essential. Inhalers need to be self-administered and should have your name on them and brought poolside. Other problems such as respiratory infections should not be brought to the pool.
12. Osteoporosis. Swimming does not provide enough resistance to help build up osteoporotic bone, however it is a relatively safe exercise – provided you don't crash into the wall or into other people! See your doctor for management of osteoporosis.

13. Epilepsy. You must ensure your epilepsy is well-controlled and get permission from your doctor that it is safe for you to swim.
14. Spinal/joint problems. If problems persist see your doctor/physio/chiropractor etc. Ask them for advice on how to train and discuss suggestions with coach. Speak to the coach for further ideas eg using fins, changing technique, trying other strokes, rest etc.
15. Surgery. Please get medical clearance before returning to swimming. If you have guidelines from your doctor, please bring them with you to each session until fitness has returned.

Whilst we endeavour to provide a safe training programme, ultimately your health is in your hands. If your exercise efforts cause you distress, then you must report it to the coach, reduce your effort and learn how to train at a safe level. This is usually as simple as checking your pulse rate after repetitions and listening to your body.

Gasping for air, chest pain, dizziness, nausea, overheating, light-headedness, confusion and loss of muscle control are all signs of overexertion. Slow return of heart rate to normal eg below 100beats per minute after 10 minutes rest and slow return to normal breathing are additional signs.

A few other pointers:

- **Do not exercise if you have a raised temperature or fever.** It is extremely dangerous and can cause permanent damage to your heart/health.
- **Bring all necessary equipment poolside.**
- **Do not bring valuables.**
- **Suggested equipment** – comfortable swimming costume, well-fitting goggles, swim cap (particularly for long hair), short fins, medication, towel, warm clothes etc
- **Drink bottle** – with water, cordial, sports drink etc. It is recommended that you drink around 500mls throughout a 1 hour training session. Put your name on it. Do not share drink bottles.
- **Name all equipment** – you may get it back if you forget it.
- **Replace carbohydrates and fluids as soon as possible after swimming.** Your muscles will recover quicker and your energy levels will lift.
- **Do not eat a heavy meal before swimming.** A low fat/light snack 2 hours prior, or an "energy" drink will give you the energy but not cause stomach discomfort. Find out what suits you best. This also applies for competition.
- **Do not drink alcohol and swim.**
- **Painkillers/anti-inflammatories may mask symptoms of injury. Use with care.**
- **Goal setting.** Let us know what your needs are.

Look after yourself and enjoy your swimming. Please ask for more information if required.