

All swimmers, regardless of skill level, should take the following safety messages into consideration when swimming in any aquatic environment:

Play It Safe By The Water

- "Never swim alone" or allow others to swim alone. Make sure there is somebody nearby who can answer a distress call.
- Check the pool area regularly for glass, bottles, toys, or other potential accident hazards.
- Follow and enforce rules such as "No running", "No pushing" and "No dunking".
- If swimming outdoors remember to Slip! Slop! Slap! Seek! Slide! to protect against sunburn. For more information visit www.sunsmart.com.au
- "Always swim between the flags". Never swim at unpatrolled beaches.
- "Look before you leap". Never run and dive into the water.
- Never swim at night, under the influence of alcohol or directly after a meal.
- "Always watch them around water". Parents should never leave a child unattended in the water or pool area for any reason.
- Ensure appropriate flotation devices are correctly fitted to your child.
- Swimming lessons are available for those wanting to learn how to swim. Contact your local pool for more information.



For further information contact

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Smartplay is funded by VicHealth and the Department of Planning and Community Development (Sport and Recreation Victoria).

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The development of this fact sheet is a partnership between Smartplay and Swimming Victoria.

Further reading

For a full list of references, contact Smartplay.

Photos courtesy of Swimming Victoria.

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Preventing Swimming Injuries



Facts and Safety Tips for
Club Swimmers

Facts on swimming injuries

Swimming has one of the highest participation rates of all sports and physical recreation activities among Australians.

The Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) conducted in 2008 reported that swimming was the third most common activity, with 2,414,300 participants.

Swimming is a popular activity as it is low impact and can be enjoyed by people of all ages both indoors and outdoors for fun, fitness or competition.

How many injuries?

- From 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, 363 people were admitted to Victorian hospitals for swimming related injuries, an average of 73 per year.
- During the same period, there were 1,045 emergency department presentations for swimming related injuries, an average of 174 per year.
- The majority of these injuries were to children aged 10-14 years.

Statistics provided by Monash University Accident Research Centre. Injuries include those from the search terms of 'swimming', 'competition', 'exercise', 'training', 'pool', 'sea', 'ocean', 'beach', 'lake', 'dam', 'channel' and 'river'.

The causes and types of injuries

- Common causes of injuries are incorrect technique and poor warm up which can cause overuse injuries like shoulder joint impingement, commonly referred to as 'swimming shoulder', which does not just affect competitive swimmers.
- The majority of injuries treated in hospital are open wounds, sprains, strains and superficial injuries. These can occur either in the water or on pool deck.
- The most common body regions injured are the head, face and foot, which account for 21% of all swimming related injuries at hospitals in Victoria.
- Abiding by pool rules and practising good pool deck etiquette decreases the risk of injury.

Factors affecting your injury risk

- Age.
- Poor swimming technique.
- Lack of warm up.
- Swimming in an unsupervised environment.
- Length of swim.
- Previous injuries.
- Flexibility.
- Muscular imbalance.

Factors decreasing your injury risk

- Regular training.
- Warming up and cooling down for every swim.
- Instruction from an accredited swimming coach.
- Proper technique.
- Swimming in a supervised environment.
- Following pool guidelines.

Safety tips for swimming

Good preparation is important

- Avoid swimming with a pre-existing illness or injury. If in doubt, talk to a sports medicine professional.
- Always warm up, stretch and cool down.
- Undertake training prior to competition to ensure readiness to swim.
- Gradually increase the intensity and duration of training.

Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Learn and practise correct swimming techniques.
- Practise pool etiquette, e.g. if lap swimming, swim in a lane corresponding to your ability and share the pool/lane with other swimmers.
- Coaches should undertake regular re-accreditation and education to ensure their knowledge is kept up to date.

Use appropriate equipment and check pool safety

- Appropriate equipment includes swimming goggles, swimming cap, kickboard, pool buoy and flippers.
- Appropriate swimwear should be worn, i.e. bathers, rash vests.
- Ensure correct fitting of bathers upon purchase.
- The pool and associated facilities should be maintained according to standards specified by State and Local Authorities regarding safety, water purity and sanitary conditions.

Wear the right protective equipment

- To avoid eye irritation purchase swimming goggles and make certain they are correctly fitted.
- Ear and nose plugs could increase comfort in the water. To ensure correct fitting consult an authorised swim accessory provider.

Other safety tips

- Eat a well balanced diet.
- Drink water before, during and after swimming.
- Qualified aquatic first aid personnel, first aid kits, ice packs and a stretcher should be available at all times.
- Telephone access, to contact emergency services, is essential.
- Pool evacuation procedures should be known and rehearsed by pool staff.

If an injury occurs

- Injured swimmers should seek prompt attention from a qualified first aider, lifeguard or medical professional.
- A medical professional should make the decision whether an injured swimmer returns to swimming.

