



BENEFITS OF SWIMMING

America's Children Fat or Fit?

Health authorities fear that a diet of too much TV and junk food and too little activity is turning America's children into a generation of couch potatoes. Sedentary lifestyles during the growth years when children need to be active leave youngsters weak, uncoordinated and poorly conditioned. The 10 leading causes of premature death in this country all have at least a partial link to lifestyle and that link can be seen in today's child. Forty percent of all 8th graders in the U.S. already display at least one risk factor for heart disease.

But with parents busier than ever, it can be difficult to ensure that a child gets all the exercise he or she needs. One of the best means of helping children get fit today is in an organized youth sports program. Some 30 million children are playing youth sports today. Surveys have shown that 60% of all young athletes retain better health habits into their adult years.

What To Look For In Youth Sports

When choosing a sport for their child, smart parents sift through the wealth of available choices to find those that provide the greatest benefits. How can you evaluate what your child's needs are as they're growing? Here are some hints:

1. The most important of all is aerobic fitness for increased work capacity and a slower heart rate.
2. Children also need to safely build strength for the ability to easily meet all of life's physical challenges.
3. Flexibility for easy movement of all the major joints and limbs. Children are born with natural suppleness but begin to lose it in adolescence.
4. Sports should teach coordination, the basis for skillful, graceful movement.
5. Through sports, children should begin to develop an appreciation for a healthy lifestyle.
6. The most important key to a child's having good experiences in youth sports is the qualifications and experience of the coach

Why Is Swimming A Winner?

With all the sports and activities that children have to choose from today, why select swimming?

First of all, the USS age group swimming program is America's largest program of guided fitness activity for children. Age group swimming builds a strong foundation for a lifetime of good health by teaching healthy fitness habits.

Secondly, many pediatricians recommend swimming as the VERY BEST developmental activity for children. Why do doctors like it so much?

- Swimming develops high quality aerobic endurance; the most important key to physical fitness. In other sports, an hour of practice may yield as little as 10 minutes of meaningful exercise. Age group swimming teams use every precious minute of practice time developing fitness and teaching skills.
- Swimming does a better job in proportional muscular development by using all the body's major muscle groups. No other sport does this as well.
- Swimming enhances children's natural flexibility (at a time when they ordinarily begin to lose it) by exercising all their major joints through a full range of motion.

- Swimming helps develop superior coordination because it requires combinations of complex movements of all parts of the body, enhancing harmonious muscle function, grace and fluidity of movement.
- Swimming is the most injury free of all children's sports.
- Swimming is a sport that will bring children fitness and enjoyment for life. Participants in Master's Swimming programs are still training and racing well into their 80's.

Learning To Learn Through Swimming

In addition to physical development, children can develop greater intellectual competence by participating in a guided program of physical activity. Learning and using swimming skills engages the thinking process. As they learn new techniques, children must develop and plan movement sequences. They improve by exploring new ideas. They learn that greater progress results from using their creative talents. Self expression can be just as much physical as intellectual. Finally, their accomplishments in learning and using new skills contribute to a stronger self image.

Age group swimmers also learn:

- to link quality of effort with quality of results
- to work cooperatively and unselfishly with others
- the value of Persistence - "If at first you don't succeed..."
- how to set goals and enjoy their achievement
- how to make intelligent choices and decisions.

Coaching Excellence The Difference Between Stress and Success

As stated earlier, nothing has a greater influence on the quality of children's sports than the excellence of the coach. Unfortunately, well qualified and knowledgeable youth coaches are hard to find. But not in age group swimming. All of our coaches, as members of the American Swim Coaches Association, have access to the most comprehensive training and certification program for youth coaches of any sport in the United States. Certified coaches in U.S. Swimming programs possess training and experience in the physiology and psychology of adolescent development. Pleasanton coaches also hold Red Cross certification in First Aid, CPR and Safety Training for Coaches. They provide assurances that the time children spend in swimming will be quality time.