

# Swimming injury prevention

Swimming is a very safe sport. It is a good sport to use for cross-training and to rest from playing the same sport year-round. Swimming is an overhead sport. This means we use our arms overhead. Our bodies can't handle a lot of these moves, so too much swimming can result in overuse injuries. Shoulder and knee pain are the most common injuries.



## What are common causes of swimming injuries?

- Poor technique or poor form.
- Muscular imbalance (when some muscles are weaker than others).
- Training too long or too hard (overuse injuries).

## How can you prevent swimming injuries?

- Have a good, total body warm-up plan. This helps your body get ready to swim. Use active stretches for your arms, legs and back muscles.
- Swim different strokes at every workout. Overuse injuries happen when swimming one stroke repeatedly. Different strokes use different muscle groups. Breathe on both sides. Breathing on only one side can cause muscle imbalances.
- Swimmers may not realize they are sweating and need to drink fluids. Drink water 30 minutes before practices and races and drink a mix of water and sports drinks during practices and meets. Only drink sports drinks if sessions are longer than 90 minutes.

## How should you warm up before swimming?

- Warming up is very important. It helps swimmers get ready for energy bursts they need.
- Warm up for 15-20 minutes.
- Start with 5 minutes of light movements to help increase the heart rate and warm up muscles. These can be on land or in water.
- Do dynamic stretches for 10 minutes. Dynamic stretches are moving stretches. You stretch by moving through your range of motion. Stretch the arms, legs and back.
- Spend 10 minutes working on stroke form and breathing exercises.
- Stretch your whole body after swimming.
  - Hold each stretch for 30 seconds or more.
  - Stretching plans should last 10-15 minutes.

## Training guidelines (Contemporary Pediatrics 11/01)

Age	Frequency	Skills
5-7	2 times a week; 20-60 min	Basic water skills and stroke technique
8-9	2-3 times a week; 45-60 min	More advanced skills and stroke technique
10-12	3-5 times a week; 60-90 min	Increased technique and introduction to competition
13-16	5-9 times a week; 90-120 min	Maximize development of all strokes over various distances

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