

## Swim Lessons – An Important Life Skill!

Before we learn to walk, we must learn to crawl, so we must also learn how to doggie paddle before we can safely swim! People of all ages are encouraged to take swim lessons. Swimming is a great form of physical activity for all ages as it incorporates the entire body; creates endurance, strength, and flexibility; is a great way to cool off and enjoy time with friends and family; and most importantly can save a life. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends all families make learning to swim a priority, as it is an important life skill that can play a key role in helping to prevent drowning.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of April 21, 2023, drowning is leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1-4. While children are at highest risk, drowning deaths occur at every age. Every year in the United States there are an average of 11 fatal drowning per day. Swimming lessons can help to reduce the risk of drowning and build a swimmer's overall confidence in the water.

**Why are swim lessons important?** Swim lessons can help save a life. Lessons help adults and children become more comfortable and confident in the water, teaches them to float, and safely operate in the water. Additionally, this skill empowers children and adults to attend social gatherings with friends and family in and around the water comfortably. Those that know how to swim are far more equipped to rescue someone in an emergency who may be struggling to swim. Teaching young children to swim improves their self-control, boosts their self-esteem, and gives them more self-confidence to handle new situations. Moreover, swimming helps to develop healthy muscles while also improving your overall cardiovascular health and performance.



**Who should take swim lessons?** Swim lessons are beneficial for all ages, including youth and adults. Drowning is a risk for all ages, especially in the presence of strong waves, currents, and other hazards. Swim lessons are progressive, so continuing with long term lessons will assist you in becoming a stronger swimmer.

**When should my child start swim lessons?** The AAP recommends swim lessons as a layer of protection against drowning that can begin for many children starting at age 1, with parent-child swim classes. Most children are ready for independent swim lessons by their fourth birthday. However, children develop at different rates, and not all children are ready to begin at the same time. When making your decision, consider your child's emotional maturity, physical and developmental abilities and limitations, and comfort level in the water. Talk to your primary care provider and to a swim professional.

**What different types of swim lessons are available?** Different swim lessons or levels offer different types of skills you can learn. Basic child and adult swim lessons focus on learning the fundamentals and building confidence in the water. More advanced classes focus on building independence and learning how to improve specific strokes or treading water for long periods of time. Other classes focus on competitive swimming, building speed, technique, and endurance.



**Is swimming a healthy choice?** According to the CDC, swimming can help with chronic diseases and mental health. Swimming is a low-impact cardiovascular exercise that engages a variety of muscle groups, making it a full body work out. Water-based exercising, such as swimming, improves the use of joints affected by arthritis and can help seniors exercise in a healthy environment.

### How can the color of my swim suit save my life?

A recent study conducted by [ALIVE Solutions Inc.](#), a company that specializes in aquatics safety, reports that the color of swimwear could make a difference in saving a life. Neon colored suits of yellow, green and orange were easily identified when submerged in pool and lake water. Bright and contrasting colors will help lifeguards see a struggling swimmer if they go under the water.



### What are the CDC top ten tips for water safety?

1. **DO learn to swim.** If you like to have a good time doing water activities, being a strong swimmer is a must.
2. **DO take a friend along.** Even though you may be a good swimmer, you never know when you may need help. Having friends around is safer and just more fun!

3. **DO know your limits.** Watch out for the “too’s” — too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much hard activity.
4. **DO swim in supervised (watched) areas only,** and follow all signs and warnings.
5. **DO wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket when boating,** jet skiing, water skiing, rafting, or fishing.
6. **DO stay alert to currents.** They can change quickly! If you get caught in a strong current, don’t fight it. Swim parallel to the shore until you have passed through it. Near piers, jetties (lines of big rocks), small dams, and docks, the current gets unpredictable and could knock you around.
7. **DO keep an eye on the weather.** If you spot bad weather (dark clouds, lighting), pack up and take the fun inside.
8. **DON’T mess around in the water.** Pushing or dunking your friends can get easily out of hand.
9. **DON’T dive into shallow water.** If you don’t know how deep the water is, don’t dive.
10. **DON’T float where you can’t swim.** Keep checking to see if the water is too deep, or if you are too far away from the shore or the poolside.

**Where can I find nearby swim lessons?** To find swim lesson locations near you, use the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s Department of Conservation & Recreation online search tool: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dcr-learn-to-swim-2022>. Additional nearby locations offering swimming lessons can be found using the chart below:

Name	Town	Website	Phone #	Lessons for Youth (Y) or Adult (A)	General pricing information
Bedford Recreation Dept. - Summer Adventures Program	Bedford	<a href="https://www.bedfordma.gov/314/Summer-Adventures">https://www.bedfordma.gov/314/Summer-Adventures</a>	781-275-1015	Y	Seasonal Membership
Beede Swim and Fitness Center	Concord	<a href="http://beedecenter.com/1123/Aquatics">http://beedecenter.com/1123/Aquatics</a>	978-287-1000	Y & A	Member and Non-Member
Boys & Girls Club	Billerica	<a href="https://www.billericabgc.com/swim-lessons">https://www.billericabgc.com/swim-lessons</a>	978-667-2193 ext. 109	Y	Annual Membership
British Swim School	Multiple Locations in Mass	<a href="https://www.britishswimschool.com/greater-boston/">https://www.britishswimschool.com/greater-boston/</a>	844-576-2796	Y	Annual Rate & Per Lesson Fee
Goldfish Swim School	Burlington	<a href="https://www.goldfishswimschool.com/burlington/">https://www.goldfishswimschool.com/burlington/</a>	781-917-3245	Y	Annual Rate & Monthly Fee
Goldfish Swim School	Westford	<a href="https://www.goldfishswimschool.com/westford/">https://www.goldfishswimschool.com/westford/</a>	978-704-8040	Y	Annual Rate & Monthly Fee
Lexington Recreation Dept.	Lexington	<a href="https://www.lexingtonma.gov/1081/Town-Aquatics">https://www.lexingtonma.gov/1081/Town-Aquatics</a>	781-862-0500	Y & A	Seasonal Membership
LifeTime Fitness	Burlington	<a href="https://www.lifetime.life/life-time-locations.html">https://www.lifetime.life/life-time-locations.html</a>	617-761-7100	Y & A	One Time Pass & Monthly Membership
SafeSplash	Lexington	<a href="https://www.safesplash.com/locations/lexington-ma">https://www.safesplash.com/locations/lexington-ma</a>	781-385-3270	Y & A	One Time Class & Monthly Membership
Wedgewood	Bedford	<a href="https://www.thewedgewoodclub.org">https://www.thewedgewoodclub.org</a>	781-275-9119	Y & A	Seasonal Membership
YMCA Waltham	Waltham	<a href="https://www.ymcaboston.org/waltham/">https://www.ymcaboston.org/waltham/</a>	781-894-5295	Y & A	Member & Non-Member
YMCA Woburn	Woburn	<a href="https://www.ymcaboston.org/northsuburban/">https://www.ymcaboston.org/northsuburban/</a>	781-935-3270	Y & A	Member & Non-Member
YMCA Lowell	Lowell	<a href="https://www.greaterlowellymca.org/index.php/programs/aquatics/swim-lessons/">https://www.greaterlowellymca.org/index.php/programs/aquatics/swim-lessons/</a>	978-454-7825 ext. 825	Y & A	Member & Non-Member