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## Swimming - health benefits

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### Summary

- As well as being fun, swimming is a great way to keep fit and well and make friends.
  - Swimming is a healthy activity that you can continue for a lifetime.
  - Swimming is a low-impact activity that has many physical and mental health benefits.
  - Make sure you know how to swim and do so in a safe environment.
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Swimming is one of the most popular sports in Australia. Our nation is surrounded by water and swimming is one of our great passions. As well as being fun, swimming is a great way to keep fit, stay healthy and make friends. Swimming is a healthy activity that you can continue for a lifetime. It is a low-impact activity that has many physical and mental health benefits.

### Swimming for recreation

Swimming is a great recreational activity for people of all ages. Recreational swimming can provide you with a low-impact workout and it's also a good way to relax and feel good. Common swimming styles in recreational swimming are breaststroke, backstroke, side stroke and freestyle.

### Competitive swimming

Some people who enjoy swimming want to take it to a competitive level. This can provide the health benefits of a vigorous workout as well as the fun and thrill of competition. The main strokes used in competitive swimming are breaststroke, freestyle, backstroke and butterfly. The distances swum in competition swimming can vary from 50 metres in a pool to much further distances in open water.

### Health benefits of swimming

Swimming is a great workout because you need to move your whole body against the resistance of the water.

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Swimming is a good all-round activity because it:

- keeps your heart rate up but takes some of the impact stress off your body
- builds endurance, muscle strength and cardiovascular fitness
- helps maintain a healthy weight, healthy heart and lungs
- tones muscles and builds strength
- provides an all-over body workout, as nearly all of your muscles are used during swimming.

### **Other benefits of swimming**

Swimming has many other benefits including:

- being a relaxing and peaceful form of exercise
- alleviating stress
- improving coordination, balance and posture
- improving flexibility
- providing good low-impact therapy for some injuries and conditions
- providing a pleasant way to cool down on a hot day
- being available in many places – you can swim in swimming pools, beaches, lakes, dams and rivers. Make sure that the environment you choose to swim in is safe.

### **Getting started with swimming**

Getting started in swimming is easy. It is a sport for all age groups, skill and fitness levels. Before you get started, you will need to purchase a pair of swimmers and some goggles. Goggles can be purchased for around \$15 and upwards.

There are public pools throughout Australia that are open to everyone. Entry to public pools usually costs a few dollars and many aquatic centres offer swimming lessons for people of all ages, as well as training and exercise groups.

### **Some general tips for swimming**

Before you dive in:

- Make sure you know how to swim.
- Choose a safe environment.
- Warm up and stretch your muscles and joints before entering the water.
- Have plenty of fluids on hand and drink regularly.
- Don't overdo it if you're just starting out.
- See your doctor if you haven't exercised for a long time.

### **Where to get help**

- Local leisure centres, public pools and swimming clubs
- Swimming Australia Tel. (02) 6219 5600
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

### **Things to remember**

- As well as being fun, swimming is a great way to keep fit and well and make friends.
- Swimming is a healthy activity that you can continue for a lifetime.
- Swimming is a low-impact activity that has many physical and mental health benefits.
- Make sure you know how to swim and do so in a safe environment.

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Smartplay

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