



USSSA Stance on Swim Lessons for Babies, Toddlers and Children



The United States Swim School Association strongly believes that babies, toddlers and children of all ages should participate in swim lessons in a high quality aquatics program. A child of any age will never be completely “drownproof” or “watersafe,” however we can teach our children and families to be safer around the water.

The best aquatics programs focus on three areas:

1

Swim skill education
in a fun and nurturing
environment

2

Safety behaviors
for the child to use
around the water

3

Parent information on the learn
to swim process and water safety
strategies they should employ, which
includes emphasis on vigilant adult
supervision around water

After working with families for so many years, we believe parents/caregivers have many misconceptions about drowning and about what it takes to keep it from happening. They think it only happens to families who “allow their children to wander and just don’t care,” but that’s just not the case. A drowning can happen quickly and quietly, and it can happen to anyone. Many parents would be surprised to find out that most drownings of young children occur in backyard pools and that it often happens during a time when a child is in the care of one or both parents. Most young children who have drowned had been missing for less than five minutes when the tragedy occurred. According to the Centers of Disease Control, drowning is responsible for more deaths among children 1-4 than any other cause except congenital anomalies (birth defects). With these kinds of statistics, parents need to do everything they can to help their children become safer around the water. Water safety includes multiple areas of vigilance and preparedness.



Barriers

Fence your pool and lock your gate. Install locks on every door and window leading to the pool area. The fence should be equipped with self-closing and self-latching gates, and should prevent direct access to the pool from the house. Four sided isolation fencing in every pool could prevent 50-90% of childhood drownings and near drownings. Other barriers include pool covers and pool alarms.

Watch Your Kids Around Water

Constant adult supervision is key to preventing accidents around the water and no child should ever be left unattended around pools or open water. Children should only be near the pool when there is a responsible adult watching the pool. This is especially important when there is a pool party or many people in the pool. When everyone is watching, then no one is watching! One person should always be the designated water watcher and they should have no other responsibilities or have any alcoholic beverages.

Swim Lessons

Swim lessons save lives. Even toddlers can learn basic swimming skills that they can use if they ever end up in the water. And a good swim program will always teach safer behaviors for children and families around the pool. However, even children with excellent swimming skills need the watchful eye of an adult to help keep them safer around the water.

Be Prepared

Preparation is needed to avoid incidents in the water. Would you know what to do in an emergency situation. If you had to, could you perform CPR on a loved one? Reduce the risk during an emergency by learning emergency response techniques. Adults should know how to perform CPR, and should post emergency instructions near the pool.

Learning to Swim Has Added Benefits:

Learning to swim at a young age has also been shown to have long term benefits for the child. A four year study conducted by Griffith University reported in 2013 a number of social, physical, cognitive and emotional benefits to babies in high quality swim lessons. “While we expected the children to show better physical development and perhaps be more confident through swimming, the results in literacy and numeracy really shocked us,” lead researcher Professor Robyn Jorgensen said. “The children were anywhere from six to 15 months ahead of the normal population when it came to cognitive skills, problem solving in mathematics, counting, language and following instructions.” Swimming affords a developing child the opportunity for a complete workout of heart, lungs, muscles and bones. It can improve quality of sleep and boost circulation aiding the immune system function resulting in fewer colds. In addition swim lessons with babies allows for important social and emotional bonding to develop with their caregiver away from cell phones, televisions and other modern distractions.

Aquatic instruction is an ongoing process that should continue long term throughout childhood to maximize the child’s learning of proper swimming techniques and respect for the water.

To find a swim school near you visit: <https://www.usswimschools.com/find-a-school/>