

Benefits of Swimming for Kids

Written by Emily Glynn

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According to SwimToday.org, a shocking 80 percent of parents disregard swimming as a viable option for their kids. Distance yourself from the ill-informed and dive headfirst into summer with advice from Dara Torres, five-time Olympian, and Jeannine Leverenz, mom to Olympic bronze-medalist Caitlin Leverenz. The two veterans know a thing or two about the benefits of the life aquatic.

There's No "I" In Team

Because of the separate lanes and ticking clock, many people are under the impression that swimming lacks the team element of more popular sports. Torres, having experienced the camaraderie amongst swimmers firsthand as both a competitor and as a mother, knows better. "In other sports, you see kids sitting on the sidelines with their arms crossed," she says. "At swim meets, everyone is involved, everyone is racing and kids are actively cheering on their teammates." Regardless of speed and ability, you'll never see your child relegated to the bench – a notorious breeding ground for bitter feelings and self-doubt. Swimming is one the few sports where everyone receives an equal opportunity to compete and as a result, swimmers channel excess energy into pushing each other to become better athletes.



Dara Torres (Photo Credit Mike Comer/ProSwim Visuals)

In The Pool

If you've got an injury-prone kid on your hands, swimming may be the perfect alternative to contact sports like football and soccer. Apart from being a great cardiovascular and whole body workout, swimming is low-impact and leads to relatively few aches, pains, sprains and tears.

On Dry Land

The merits of swimming stick with kids long after they've exited the water. "You learn about discipline, you learn about time management," says Torres. "As you get older, you learn about hard work, sacrifice, dedication. So many great things come from the sport of swimming that trickle down into other aspects of your life." Leverenz, who couldn't agree more, attributes her daughter's surge in confidence to long, fun-filled hours in the pool.



Jeannine Leverenz cheering on Caitlin at the London Olympics (Photo Credit: Jeannine Leverenz)

We Are Family

Shuttling the kids to and from their individual soccer games and dance rehearsals can rack up enough miles to equal a cross country road trip, whereas swimming, keeps things streamlined. Teams are divvied up by age, but everyone competes at the same meet and as a result, families are able to spend quality time supporting one another – and building new friendships. "Some of our closest friends we met originally through swimming," says Leverenz. She encourages new swim parents to put themselves out there by volunteering at meets. Try your hand at timing races, working the snack bar or distributing ribbons. You'll be family in no time.

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Now What?

It's time to suit up and hit the deck. With SwimToday.org, finding a youth or Masters (18 and older) swim team in your area is easy. Simply visit the site and enter your address or zip code. Chances are there's a pool within several miles of your home