

## Swimming Protocols

### About Our Swim Instructors

All YMCA Swim Lesson Instructors have been trained through the YMCA of the USA to teach swim lessons at a variety of levels from Parent Child-Preschool-Youth. They are all lifeguard, AED, First-Aid, and CPR certified. There will always be a certified lifeguard present at your child's lesson.

### Your Role as the Parent

At the YMCA of Greater Westfield, we definitely encourage parents to support their child throughout the swim lesson. We love the clapping and encouragement. We do ask, however, for the success of your child and the other children in the class that you do sit away from the lesson (on the bleachers not on the blue benches) and to keep the coaching to a minimum. When a child is hearing instruction from both their teacher and parent it can be confusing. Please help your child practice over the weekends by reinforcing the instruction they receive during their lesson. The more they practice, the more successful they will become!

### Supportive:

Be supportive of your children. Learning to swim can be very difficult (even getting in the water!). Remember that fear is learned. If you are hesitant or fearful of your child in the water, your child will generally acquire your fearful attitude. Your child's progress and enjoyment can be enhanced when you and your child are enthusiastic about swimming.

### Positive Reinforcement:

Any disciplinary problems during the lesson should be taken care of by the swim instructor. Positive reinforcement to encourage appropriate class behavior will include: removing the child from the swim lesson (i.e. "time out" small period of time) and may include talking about the problem with the parent and/ or Lessons Coordinator.

### Practicing at Home:

A great way to enhance your child's swim lesson experience is by practicing at home. (You don't even need a pool to do this!)

If this is your child's first experience with swim lessons, talk about how fun lessons will be, how they will meet new friends, and how important it is to be a good listener.

- After swim lessons, ask your child about the skills they learned.
- For younger swimmers (parent/tots, tots, advanced tots), practice blowing bubbles in the bathtub, wash their face with a washcloth, or slowly pour water over their heads. These fun exercises aid in the development of being comfortable with getting the mouth, nose, eyes, and ears wet, as well as future swimming experiences.
- (Parent Child Classes) Sing the songs learned in class during bath time or in the car on the way to lessons. These songs usually include: "Wheels on the Bus," "Tick Toc," and "Motorboat."
- Pointed Toes – Have the child point their toes at objects while sitting, then, try kicking with entire leg.

- Holding Breath – Practice out of water or with parent’s help in bathtub. See how long they can hold their breath while someone counts for them.
- Arm Strokes (front and back) – Have child make “big arm circles” while walking.
- Arms With Side Breathing – Child sits in parent’s lap keeping head down as if it were in the water. They pretend to take a breath to the side, blow bubbles down while making big circles with arms.
- Kicking (All levels) – Child lays on bed with legs off the side. Concentrates on keeping legs straight. Emphasize kick from hip, pointed toes.
- Remind your child why learning how to swim is important (i.e. to participate on the swim teams, to go swimming at the beach, to go swimming at a waterpark or backyard pool).

### **Learning To Swim Is Fun!**

The American Red Cross Learn-to-Swim courses offered at our facilities are designed to give your child a positive learning experience and teaches lifelong swimming skills.

Regardless of your child’s swimming ability, you can play a critical role in guiding, caring for, supervising, motivating and working with your child during this experience. The following are some suggestions to help you in providing the best experience for your child:

### **Prepare your child for this experience.**

Give your child an opportunity to visit the pool before the beginning of class. Describe what will be happening and perhaps talk to an instructor or our Lessons Coordinator.

### **Be prompt.**

Children can get anxious if hurried. Allow plenty of time before and after class for showering, going to the bathroom and dressing.

### **Follow rules and regulations.**

You are responsible for your child’s actions, not the instructor or lifeguard. Teach, talk about and review the pool rules with your child. Lead by example.

### **Attend every lesson.**

Frequent practice is the key to adjustment and learning. Children can regress quickly if not allowed to practice. It is a good idea to encourage a crying or hesitant child to continue attending the class. Just being around the pool and observing the activities can help your child adjust.

### **Complete all the levels.**

Make sure your child completes all the learn-to-swim levels so that he or she truly has the skills to be safe in, on and around water.

**Encourage safe practices.**

Young children cannot be expected to exercise good judgment and caution. Children must be constantly reminded to walk slowly in the pool area and only enter the water with the instructor during the class and with you after the class.

**Have patience.**

It is important not to pressure your child to perform before he or she is ready. Readiness results from maturity, experiences and other individual factors.

**Avoid comparisons.** No two children develop at the same rate. Each child learns at a different pace depending on factors such as physical growth, individual development, comfort, practice and previous experience. Respect your child's qualities and do not compare them to their siblings or other children.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: What causes fear of the water?**

A: Some of the more common causes of early fear of the water have to do with the way parents or guardians relate to their children in and around water.

These causes include:

- Being raised by parents or guardians who are afraid of the water and have either knowingly or unknowingly communicated this fear to their children
- Being forced into water activities beyond the ability or comfort level
- Being carelessly handled in water experiences
- Being involved in or witnessing a traumatic water accident
- Having a fear of the unknown or a general fear of new experiences

**Q: What helps prevent fear of the water?**

A: No matter how cautious you are, fear cannot always be prevented. You can help reduce fear in the following ways:

- Provide enjoyable non-threatening water activities that are simple and fun, to build confidence and success.
- Arrange for regular, continued contact with a water environment for your child.
- Select safe water environments and supervise all water play.
- Treat water mishaps sympathetically, but do not alarm your child, make their mishaps into an accomplishment! (i.e. 'Did you go under water to see Nemo? Did you find him?').
- Be aware of your facial expressions and choice of words so that you do not
- signal panic or fear(picking a child up after they have fallen under water and asking are they ok?).
- Try using goggles. This may help children explore under the water.
- Teach your child "respect" for the water and water rules without implied threats or fear.
- Lead by example. Follow rules and enjoy the water with your child. Get your face wet and perform some of the simple and fun activities in the program.

**Q: What if my child already has a fear of the water?**

A: Respect your child's feelings. Teasing or getting angry only makes matters worse. Progress slowly by following these guidelines:

- Provide plenty of time for your child to adjust to the new setting.
- Concentrate on activities with which your child is comfortable and ready.
- Expose your child to other children who are having fun.
- Enjoy the water yourself with your child.

**Q: How many lessons is it going to take for my child to "swim"?**

A: Children vary widely when it comes to learning a skill. In general, each child's readiness is influenced by physical development, previous experiences, home environment, parent/ guardian attitudes, and individual preferences. For most skills, there are simple prerequisites, activities and lead-ups that can prepare the child to perform those skills. For example, before children are ready to put their entire face in the water, they may need to practice blowing bubbles, washing the face, splashing and putting parts of the face in the water. It may take 30–80 lessons before a child can swim independently. However, to make sure your child does learn to swim well, be sure that he or she completes all of the learn-to-swim levels.

**Q: Will my child become "drown proof" after participating in the Preschool Community Lessons (Pike, Eel/Ray)?**

A: Participation in any swimming lesson program does not "drown proof" your child. It is only the first step in developing your child's water safety and swimming skills. Year-round practice, regular exposure to water and positive encouragement are the tools needed for developing your child's comfort level in water and improving his or her swimming skills.