

Be a Smart Swimmer Avoidance of Overuse Injuries:

Most swimming injuries are classified as overuse injuries and occur most commonly to the spine, shoulder, knee and feet.

The key to avoidance of injuries is to be actively involved in their prevention. Athletes must not think of pain as a reward, nor should they assume a no pain, no gain attitude; Instead the athlete should train and not strain. They should think of pain as saying “dummy, you over did it”.

1. Have a sound stroke, poor swimming technique not only slows you down but also puts you at risk for injury. Listen to your coach’s advice about your swimming form. Your coach can provide stroke analysis that can help guide you away from stroke errors that contribute to injury
2. Don’t do anything that hurts. Avoid the no pain, no gain attitude. It is alright to feel a little fatigued after a swim. It is healthy for the muscles to ache after effort. Learn how to disguise the discomfort of ache from the pain of over-fatigue or injury.
3. Increase duration and/or yardage gradually. Training should gradually increase the demand on the swimmer as the season progresses. The body’s joints, muscles and bones take time to train up to full strength and capacity. If you miss several weeks due to school or other obligations, make sure to make adjustments in your training schedule.
4. Do preventive exercise!!!! A well-rounded exercise program can help to provide muscle balance which can in turn help to avoid injury. A pre-participation examination by trained sports specialist can assist in preventative routines that help balance out your muscles, loosen tightened structures and help avoid impingement syndromes, such as paddles, must be used with caution because the increased leverage can overload the shoulder rotator cuff muscles.
5. Proper warming up the muscles and joints can help prepare them for your rigorous workout ahead. A muscle that is warmed up and flexible is less prone to injury. A warm should be gentle in nature.
6. Stretching should be done as part of your daily training warm up routine. Studies have shown that swimmers with restricted flexibility were more likely to develop tendonitis than those who maintain flexibility with stretching program. Remember, if you arrive late for training work-out be sure to spend time performing your stretches and warm up before jumping into your group’s next set.

7. **Resist the temptation to do an occasional sprint when already fatigued. As a swimmer fatigues, subtle changes in stroke and motion occur. These changes created by fatigues, recruit muscles that are less strong and less trained. The joints are thus not stabilized sufficiently and joint structure becomes vulnerable to injury. Fatigue leads to early fatigue and possible injury.**
8. **Quite when you hit the wall. During a long day of training, you may run out of muscle energy, which is derived from glycogen stored in the muscle. This usually occurs when you are not yet ready for sustained training, not eating right or just having a bad day. Back off from becoming fatigued since it is bad for your stroke and may cause injury.**

Rehydration Tips for Swimmers:

If your work out last long enough, you will need to replenish perspired water and electrolytes. Fluid loss can impair performance, compromising your hard practices and meets. You may not perceive that you are sweating (losing fluid) so it is important to consume fluids on a scheduled basis. The exercising athlete should consume 8 to 10 ounces of a carbohydrate sport drink every 15 to 20 minutes.

At a swim meet, although the duration of warm-ups and events are relatively short, if the weather is warm or if you are in a hot indoor pool, you will lose a lot of water between events. You should compensate for fluid losses throughout the day, by continuing to drink. Remember, when you start feeling thirsty it is ready too late! Infrequent urination with darkly colored urine of relatively small volume can indicate dehydration. Carbohydrate sports drinks such as Gatorade, PowerAde etc should be served cold when the weather is hot since it helps cool the body.

Remember to drink early and at regular intervals.