

Swimming Is One Way To Stay Healthy & Fit

A Guide To Defining Activity Goals With Children

Parents should take the time to discuss health and activity-related goals with their children. You can use this handout as a starting point to develop goals with your child for swimming. Note that you can adapt this outline for whatever type of activity your child is interested in.

TALK ABOUT SWIMMING

Talk with your child about swimming and its positive effect on the body. Get them excited about engaging in a new activity. Your conversation may go something like this:

It's fun to be in a sport like swimming. Did you know that it also helps your body? When you play a sport, you build your muscles in three ways:

1. You make your muscles stronger.
2. You make your muscles stretch and pull without getting hurt.
3. You can work and play longer without getting tired. You can swim farther.

Did you know that your heart is a muscle? To build your muscles, heart and lungs, you must play a sport at least three times a week. Before you play, you should warm up by walking, then gently stretching your muscles. This will keep your muscles from getting hurt when you play your sport. After you stop playing, walk and then stretch. This gives your body a chance to slow down and your heart rate to return to normal. The wonderful thing about swimming is that it's one of the sports you can do your whole life.

DEFINE GOALS

Next, define with your child goals for swimming. For example, you may choose to set a main, long-term goal, such as:

- Swim the length of the pool a certain number of times in one session.
- Get really good at one particular stroke, like the breast stroke.
- Practice swimming (number of times a month).
- Convince a friend to learn to swim and then do it together.
- Develop a new game your child and his or her friends can play in the water.
- Join the swim team or a synchronized swimming class.

Then, you can list the intermediate or short-term goals required to reach the main goal.

WRITE THE GOALS DOWN

Goals will become more real for your child if you write them down together. Here's one way to do it. With your child, fill out the form on the back of this sheet and post it in his or her room. Your child can then check off his or her goals as they are accomplished.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The CDC has material on children and water safety, including information on swimming, using sun screen and more, at www.cdc.gov/node.do/id/0900f3ec8016eb51. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has materials for parents and children, and many of the materials are available in English and Spanish, visit corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/watersafety/art.html.

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My Swimming Goals

Name: _____

Age: _____

Swimming goal (what I want to accomplish):

In my next swim class, I will:

In one week, I will:

In one month, I will:

By the end of the session, I will:

By the end of the school year, I will:

