



SWIMMING IN WINTER

Swimming? In the winter? YES!

TRUE OR FALSE: Involving a child in swimming or other water activities during the winter will cause the child to have an inordinate amount of colds and other illnesses. They can catch cold from going outside with a “wet head”.

The answer: a most resounding FALSE!

The TRUTH: The benefits of winter swimming for children far outweigh the risk.

Amazingly enough, as we prepare for our winter sessions each year, we notice that some of our parents take their children out of class “as a precautionary measure”. They are convinced that their child will catch cold or the flu from being in the pool and getting wet during the winter. When these same swimmers return early in the spring, we are often told that they still caught colds or the flu during the winter months. Not only do these children miss out on the benefits of winter swimming during the “lay off” period; in most cases, their skills noticeably regress.

Moms and Dads, ask your pediatricians. Getting colds and flu from exposure to cold air during the winter is just an old wives’ tale. There is no scientific evidence that this is a factor. Colds and flu are generally transmitted by casual contact with an infected person. There is more likelihood they will catch a cold or flu from a sibling (or from you) than from swimming. One rule of thumb to follow: if your child is sick, keep him/her home to minimize exposure to others. This common sense rule applies ANY time of year, not just in winter.

What are the benefits of winter swimming? Plenty! Children who swim through the winter maintain continuity and increase their skill levels as they practice each week. Physical fitness is increased, and children who swim year round actually tend to be healthier than their non-swimming counterparts. How, you ask? Consider the excellent health benefits that can be obtained by year round swimming at any age.

The deep breathing that occurs in swimming helps keep the lungs clear of accumulated mucous, reducing the chance of respiratory problems. In fact, swimming is a preferred exercise for asthmatics because of the warm, moist environment we maintain. The type of deep breathing that occurs in swimming helps to pump the cerebrospinal fluid through the body, assisting the body in maintaining a high intake of oxygen to the brain and the blood.

The body’s internal cleaning system is governed by the lymph system. Lymph is a milky liquid that transports toxins from the cells to the blood, which, in turn, releases them out of the body through the lungs, kidneys, intestines, and skin. There is twice as much lymph in the body as there is blood, and it is transported through the body by the action of muscles instead of the heart. Thus, movement of the muscles is imperative to a healthy body. And how do we move our muscles? EXERCISE!

It is amazing to watch young children enjoy themselves in the water. Even our youngest babies have a look of sheer pleasure on their face. Research has shown that when we enjoy ourselves, the brain produces very powerful biochemicals called endorphins, which are the strongest painkillers known to mankind. Not only do endorphins ease pain, they boost the immune system, which is a vital part of staying healthy during the cold, winter months.

Stress affects the immune system of everyone. Love, laughter, and thirty minutes of swimming in a warm water environment are a great relief valve for anyone!

So, parents, here's the prescription for a happy, healthy child this winter:

- Keep them home when they are sick.
- Dress them warm by layering when it's cold outside. Keep those hats on, because 70% of the body's heat is lost through the top of the head. Several layers will insulate better than one big, thick layer.
- Feed them a nutritionally sound diet and really push those fruits and vegetables.

Keep them physically active by enrolling them in a swim class at Aquazone where you will find excellence in aquatic education!