

# AUSSI Masters Swimming WA Branch Inc

PO Box 564, Claremont WA 6010

Tel: (08) 9441 8249 Fax: (08) 9441 8254

The AUSSI purpose is "To encourage adults, regardless of age or ability, to swim regularly in order to promote fitness and improve general health."

## GUIDELINES TO A SAFE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

Swimming is an ideal exercise to improve your health and fitness. However, like any other exercise programme it should be planned, it should be safe and it should progress slowly. If you are a new member or have stopped training for more than 4 weeks then you need to carefully assess what stresses you are putting upon yourself. The aim of a swimming programme is to achieve positive results from the exercise not place undue stress on the body and cause harm or injury.

The best form of exercise is aerobic exercise where the heart rate is kept between 120-150 beats per minute for at least 20-30 minutes. Sprinting for the unconditioned can be harmful. The breathless, red faced individual who can't talk or walk after a swim is placing much more stress on their body e.g. increased blood pressure, heart stress, etc than is necessary or desirable.

If you are still stressed 5-10 minutes after training or a swim then slow down and reassess what you are asking your body to do.

## A SAFE SWIMMING PROGRAMME - ACTION STEPS

1. Make sure you are in good health. \* If in doubt or over the age of 35 have a medical check first.  
\* You should have your blood pressure checked and make sure it is within the normal range, i.e. less than 140/90.
2. Make sure your swimming is enjoyable.
3. Make sure your swimming times fit as conveniently as possible into your daily routine.
4. Obtain the necessary basic equipment, e.g. comfortable bathers, goggles, cap, etc.
5. Set some realistic objectives. You won't be setting any world records in the first weeks!!
6. Plan your sessions to include :  
**WARM UP, STRETCHING, MAIN WORK SESSION AND COOL DOWN.**  
This applies to training and race conditioning.
7. Take note of the length of time you exercise (exclude rest periods), and measure any distance covered.
8. Make a brief record of your swimming as this helps to motivate you when you see the progress.
9. Improve the skill of your swimming so that: it is more enjoyable; you progress and the chance of injury is minimized.
10. **BE REALISTIC ABOUT YOUR STARTING LEVEL OF FITNESS.**

## ARE YOU OVERDOING IT?

There are 3 ways you can check if you are exercising too hard.

1. SYMPTOMS DURING EXERCISE - Signs of Over Exertion are:
  - a) tightness or pain in the chest
  - b) severe breathlessness
  - c) light-headedness
  - d) dizziness
  - e) loss of muscle control and nausea
  - f) confusion and incoherent behaviour
  - g) excessive overheating and failure to get rid of excess body heat.

If you experience any of these symptoms stop exercising immediately and have a medical check up.

## 2. RECOVERY HEART RATE

5 minutes after exercise count your pulse.

- If it is still over 120 this indicates the exercise was too hard for your present condition.

Check after 10 minutes.

- It should be below 100, if not then ease up on your programme until you achieve this.

## 3. RECOVERY BREATHING RATE

Normal resting breathing rate is from 12-20 breathes per minute.

If you are still short of breath 10 minutes after exercising then you are working too hard.

If your breathing is distressed after this time you should seek medical advice.

REMEMBER: THE AIM OF EXERCISE IS TO TRAIN NOT STRAIN  
YOU ARE TRYING TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH NOT ENDANGER IT.

## SPECIAL NOTES

1. If you feel ill while training, you will need to start at a lower level when you resume. If you have a fever or infection DO NOT EXERCISE.
2. It will take about 12 weeks of conditioning before you are ready for an intensive exercise programme.
3. Exercise in very cold conditions or cold water should be avoided. The chill factor can limit exercise and cause injury. Cold conditions and cold water swimming can lead to "hypothermia" - a cooling of the body which is harmful to health and therefore not advised. Water below **20 degrees** celsius is not suitable for most people to train in. Comfortable water is between **25-27 degrees** celsius.
4. Swimming will produce heat. If you are swimming hard and fast this may be excessive. If you are in a heated pool (especially above **27 degrees** celsius) you may not be able to get out of the heat fast enough. This depends on your fitness, body build, age and intensity of swimming. Heat stress can be a real factor in these conditions that will decrease performance.
5. Curb the desire to race until you have given your body a chance to reach a desired level of fitness.
6. Over training may occur if the frequency and intensity of your training is too high. Signs of over training are :

poor performance at training  
irritability  
weight loss

poor times at time trials  
sleeplessness  
excessive tiredness, etc.

The only solution is to ease up or take some rest days.

ENJOY YOUR AUSSI SWIMMING AND GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR SWIMMING PROGRAMME.

Kay Cox  
DIRECTOR OF FITNESS & EDUCATION