

PFA Tips

Finding the Right Swim Lesson

For children, knowing how to swim can be a life-saver. For children with autism, a population for which drowning is a top cause of death, this is especially true. One way to protect them, of course, is to teach them how to swim. Though kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) tend to have a deep appreciation for water, they may not respond well to traditional swim lessons. If you're seeking swim lessons for your child, here is a step-by-step process to help you find the right program for them.

Look for small classes

A traditional swim lesson may not offer the supervision and attention your child needs to be successful. However, there are many programs that are designed specifically based on the needs of children with autism. Visit our online provider database and check the category "Recreation and Social Groups."

Make sure any necessary adaptive equipment is provided

If your child has physical disabilities, you will need to find a pool that is fully accessible for them. The Americans with Disabilities Act has put in place certain accessibility requirements for public pools. Seek out a pool that meets these requirements.

Make sure the swim instructor is trained to work with children with ASD

Your child will be most successful with an instructor who understands their needs and how to work with them. As this guide to aquatic therapy for children with autism notes, specially trained instructors will know to focus on three key areas of concern for children with autism—"communication, social interaction, and interest." This guide also provides other helpful tips on how to find a swim program that will work well for a child with autism.

Find a program that can address sensory processing disorder

If your child has sensory issues, seek out a swim program that is familiar with

dealing with those issues as lessons unfold. Certainly, don't let problems associated with a sensory processing disorder convince you that your child won't be a successful swimmer. As this blog post on children with autism and sensory issues notes, often even children who have sensory problems associated with water love being in the water once they've been exposed to it.

When you find the right program for your child, you may be pleasantly surprised. The extraordinary benefits that come from swimming will make a huge difference in your child's life.

Additional Resources

Pathfinders for Autism Online Provider Databases
<http://pathfindersforautism.org/providers-services/>

PFA Tips: Make Swimming Fun and Safe
<http://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/pfa-tips-make-swimming-fun-and-safe/>

Tips for Teaching Swimming to Students with Autism
<http://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/recreation/tips-for-teaching-swimming-to-students-with-autism/>

Video: "Swim School" by Real Look Autism
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqjLYfG55ic&feature=youtu.be>

Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements for public pools
https://www.ada.gov/pools_2010.htm

In The Swim Blog: Autism and Swimming
<http://blog.intheswim.com/health-you-autism-and-swimming/>

Make Swimming Easier for Your Child with Sensory Issues, Part I
<https://sensorysmartparent.wordpress.com/tag/swimming-and-sensory-processing-disorder/>



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