

The Health Benefits of Swimming

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Published August 02, 2006

Have you ever watched the Olympics and found yourself in awe of the professional swimmers' physiques? Their long, lean and toned muscular **bodies** seem to glide through the water effortlessly.

Swimmers are in fantastic shape and those who swim regularly know that they not only **look great** on the outside but feel just as great on the inside. The health benefits of swimming are almost unmatched by most any other **sport**.



Why is Swimming So Good?

Swimming works your whole body, improving cardiovascular conditioning, muscle strength, endurance, posture, and flexibility all at the same time. Your **cardiovascular** system in particular benefits because swimming improves your body's use of oxygen without overworking your **heart**.

As you become fitter and are able to swim longer, your resting **heart** rate and respiratory rate will be reduced, making blood flow to the heart and lungs more efficient. If you're looking to lose weight, swimming is just the ticket.

On average, a swimmer can burn as many calories in an hour as a runner who runs six miles in one hour. Simply put, some call swimming the perfect form of exercise.

Additional Health Benefits of Swimming

Whole body conditioning:

Swimming tones your upper and lower body because you're using almost all of your major muscle groups. The best **strokes** for all-over body toning are the freestyle, breaststroke and backstroke.

Low risk of injury:

There is a low risk for swimming injuries because there's no stress on your bones, joints or connective tissues due to buoyancy and the fact that you weigh 1/10th less in water. If you're looking for a safe daily workout **routine**, swimming is ideal because you can rigorously work out with a reduced chance of swimming injuries. Many athletes **supplement** their training with swimming.

Low-impact exercise:

So many people can reap the benefits of swimming. Pregnant women benefit from swimming because it helps strengthen the shoulder and abdominal muscles, which can be strained when carrying a baby. The elderly and those recovering from an injury often turn to swimming or water aerobic exercises because it's low impact, helps relax stiff muscles and isn't weight-bearing. Swimming also increases circulation.

Improve blood pressure:

Studies have shown that a workout routine that includes swimming can help reduce and possibly prevent high blood pressure, which lowers your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Stress reduction:

You don't have to be a water sign in the zodiac to feel the meditative and healing properties of water. Swimming is extremely relaxing because it allows more oxygen to flow to your muscles and forces you to regulate your breathing. It's also a great way to relieve stress. Our bodies are made up of about 60% water so it's no wonder why some feel such a draw to the water.

Take the Plunge

Do you want to take up swimming but don't know how to get your feet wet? First, if you have any existing injury or asthma, consult your doctor to determine if you should swim and at what pace.

Start slowly, especially if the pool feels like foreign land. Experts recommend that beginner swimmers start with 12-20 minutes of swimming, and once your strokes become more efficient, your ability to swim longer will also. For exercise purposes, the best stroke to use in the pool is freestyle, where your arms are moving in a windmill motion while your body is pivoting and you're breathing on the side of the arm that's out of the water.

To keep your swimming routine fresh, mix up the freestyle stroke with other strokes, such as the backstroke or butterfly. Not only will using a variety of strokes save you from boredom, but you'll be working different muscles for a more effective workout every time.

If laps aren't your thing, there are plenty of other good swimming exercises. Try walking or running in water, which many people find easier to do than on land.

Tread water – it can be exhausting but will help tone your legs and arms.

Don't just take advantage of only the water either – use the walls of the pool to kick without a kickboard or to do leg lifts. The water is an ideal playground for all forms of swimming as exercise – just be creative!

By now, you should have your swim suit or trunks on and be applying sunscreen and looking for the nearest pool, lake or ocean. You're now informed of what the excellent health benefits of swimming are, so why not make swimming a part of your regular exercise routine?

Dive into your morning with some laps to start your day off feeling relaxed and renewed or go for a dip at night to release all of the stress you've built up during the day. Go ahead – take the plunge into your new swimming-for-exercise workout routine.

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