



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## **Water Safety and Swim Lessons Key Messages**

### **General Swimming/Water Safety Month**

**May is National Water Safety Month. Teaching children how to swim and be safe around water is one of the most important life skills parents can help their children learn. It not only saves lives; it builds confidence.**

- Research shows that participation in formal water safety and swim lessons can reduce the risk of drowning among children 1 to 4 years of age.
- Participation in swimming helps teach children at a young age to strive for physical achievement.
- Water safety and swim lessons promote a lifelong enjoyment of swimming, encourages healthy living and the prevention of chronic disease.
- Learning to enjoy activities in and around the water nurtures social-emotional, cognitive and physical development.

### **Safety Around Water**

**Drowning poses a threat to the health and well-being of people nationwide, particularly among children and minority populations.**

- Two children die every day because of drowning.
- Drowning is the leading cause of death for children 1 to 4 years old and is the second leading cause of death for children from 5 to 14 years old.
- According to a national research study conducted by the USA Swimming Foundation and the University of Memphis, 70 percent of African American and 60 percent of Hispanic children cannot swim compared to 40 percent of Caucasian children.
- African American youth ages 5-14 are three times more likely to drown than their white counterparts.

**The Y's Safety Around Water program teaches children of all ages and from all backgrounds that water should be fun, not feared, if you know how to stay safe in and around water.**

- The Y is awarding more than 27,000 scholarships for free water safety lessons to children from underserved communities as a part of Safety Around Water.
- Additionally, Safety Around Water educates parents about the importance of water safety lessons for their children.
  - Many parents don't put their children in water safety lessons because of lack of access to water, culture, family history or a general lack of knowledge on the importance of water safety.

**In Safety Around Water, kids learn what to do if they find themselves in the water unexpectedly.**

- Children learn fundamental water safety skills that include the concepts of reach, throw, don't go; CPR and what to look for in a safe place to swim.
- *Jump/Push/Turn/Grab* teaches a child to push off the bottom of the pool as they are submerging to get back up to the surface while turning to grab the side of the pool.
- *Swim/Float/Swim* teaches children to swim a short distance on their front, roll over onto their back to rest, and then roll on their front to continue swimming to safety.

**YMCA Swim Lessons**

**The Y is "America's Swim Instructor" and the most accessible community resource to prevent drowning and encourage a lifelong enjoyment of swimming.**

- The Y introduced the country to the concept of group swim lessons more than 100 years ago, (1909).
- Each year, the Y teaches more than a million children invaluable water safety and swimming skills.
- As one of the largest community-based organizations in the country, the Y owns or manages over 2,000 pools.
- Thanks to its size and reach, the Y is in a unique position to help bridge the gap in the delivery of swim lessons and water safety education in the U.S.—especially in underserved communities.

**Y Swim Lessons continue to evolve to better meet the needs of the people they serve.**

- The latest evolution of Y Swim Lessons accommodates students of varying abilities to help foster a sense of achievement as swimmers' progress between levels.
- Through this approach, advanced swimmers flow more easily to higher levels while swimmers who need more instruction can learn at their own pace.
- The results are more confident swimmers who stick with lessons and develop a love for swimming that can last a lifetime.

**There are three general categories of Y Swim Lessons.**

- **Swim Starters** develops water enrichment and aquatic readiness in children ages 6 months to 3 years. This category focuses on developing swim readiness skills through fun and confidence-building experiences. Parents also learn how to supervise children in the water, how to prevent accidents and how to plan for emergencies.
- **Swim Basics** develops personal water safety and basic swimming skills in students of all ages. Swimmers develop a high level of comfort in the water by practicing safe water habits, engaging in underwater exploration, and learning how to swim to safety and exit if they fall into a body of water.
- **Swim Strokes** introduces and refines stroke technique in older students (school age, teens and adults). Having mastered the fundamentals, students learn additional water safety skills and build stroke technique, developing skills that prevent chronic disease, increase social-emotional and cognitive well-being and foster a lifetime of physical activity.

***Water Safety and Swim Reminders...***

- Safety Around Water and Y Swim Lessons are two separate programs and should be communicated as such.
- The curricula for Y Swim Lessons and Safety Around Water do overlap, but the goal and delivery of the programs differ. Make sure you don't confuse people when speaking about both programs.
- When speaking generally about Safety Around Water, refer to the program as "water safety lessons" not "swim lessons." There is a difference that the media and external stakeholders oftentimes don't understand.
- When talking about Safety Around Water, mention that it is a good introduction to swimming that continues in Y Swim Lessons.
- When talking about Y Swim Lessons, mention that Safety Around Water (if offered) is a good first step to get children familiar and armed with the necessary skills to be safe in and around the water.