



Take Your Mark!

Potomac Valley Swimming
Parents Newsletter

October, 2018

What Causes Bad Air Quality?

We've all experienced it. After a long weekend at a swim meet your child is coughing, sniffing, and suffering from burning eyes and lungs. Some pools are better, some pools are worse. But poor air quality can affect both swimmers and spectators, and it's typically among the biggest complaints we hear.

The most prevalent air quality issue facing indoor swimming pool facilities is that of airborne chloramines. To remain clean and healthful pools rely on a disinfectant chemical such as chlorine or bromine. These chemicals eliminate organic matter—bacteria, dirt, sweat, body oils, hair, dead skin, mucus and yes, urine. But, in doing so, they create byproducts called chloramines, and these byproducts are the real culprits. Nitrogen trichloride forms above the surface of the pool, creating that “pool smell” and burning eyes, skin, noses, and throats.

What can be done to alleviate the situation? Every indoor pool has an air exchange system, of course. But with hundreds of swimmers in the pool, few filtration systems are adequate to the challenge. The real solution is for swimmers to shower before entering the pool and—most importantly—refrain from peeing in the pool. But the cure is difficult to enforce.

It's really a matter of changing the culture, and the logical starting place is with our younger swimmers. We need to impress upon them that by rinsing off all the sweat and oils on their bodies and not using the pool as their personal toilet, swimmers can help improve their own situation by curtailing the creation of chloramines.



Technical Suits for Young Swimmers

“Technical suits” have become the rage in the world of swimming. These expensive swimsuits (\$200-\$600) have been touted as game-changers, and at a top level meet you don't see an elite swimmer competing without one.

What makes these suits so desirable for elite athletes? First, the suits are designed to fit very tightly in order to compress the muscles. This can create a slimmer profile in the water and enhance the streamline. Second, the suit is designed to reduce drag. The fabric is substantially water-repellent; seams are fused together rather than sewn, further reducing friction in the water.

When properly sized, these suits look like they are painted onto the swimmer—there are no wrinkles or sagging. The downside is that the athlete has only a few swims in the suit before it becomes “stretched out,” losing much of its compression and water repellency. But until then, a technical suit might mean a meaningful drop of time to an elite swimmer.

“So, buying this suit will enable my 9-year-old to make a JO cut, right?”

Sorry. No suit will fix your child’s stroke, improve his/her starts and turns, or develop his/her kick. These are the things that are more likely to make your child faster in the pool.

Young swimmers typically drop time like crazy. They’re growing at a rapid rate; at the same time they are practicing the fundamentals, mastering the skills, and learning the techniques of competitive swimming. At this age, personal bests will happen regardless of the type of suits they’re wearing.

While technical suits can be found in some small sizes, they are simply not designed for young swimmers. Muscle compression is one of the principal functions of a tech suit, so unless your age-group swimmer is muscularly developed way beyond his/her years, absolutely no benefit will be gained here.

Most manufacturers say a tech suit will last for up to 6 competitions. Even the top swimmers use them only for the most important meets, and they often get their suits for free since they’re sponsored by suit manufacturers.

We all want our children to develop a healthy work ethic. We tell them that hard work pays off. We want our kids to set challenging goals, to have a plan for achieving those goals, and to consistently give their best effort following that plan. The last thing we should be doing is giving them the impression that we can buy a shortcut, one that will make them faster without any effort—especially when that’s simply untrue.

Effective September 1, 2020, USA Swimming will ban the use of these suits for swimmers aged 12 & under at meets other than National Championship level meets. Potomac Valley Swimming discourages the use of technical suits for our younger swimmers. We strongly believe that the minimal potential benefit does not justify the significant expense. We believe that our young athletes are better served by focusing on technique, fitness, work ethic, and sportsmanship.



What Is Positive Check In?

Positive Check In is the requirement that a swimmer indicates his/her intention to swim a specific event by marking their name on a list. The Meet Announcement or information posted on the PVS Website indicates which events require Positive Check In and what time the check-in period closes.

Most often there is a table set-up on deck. On this table are lists of swimmers who were entered into the Positive Check In events. Swimmers must check in to the event by initialing next to their name on the list, prior to the announced deadline. They must do this for each event they're swimming.

After the check-in deadline has passed, the event is seeded, and heat/lane assignments are posted. Any swimmers that have not checked-in by the Positive Check In deadline are scratched from the event.

If a swimmer checks in for a Positive Check In event but fails to swim, a penalty is usually assessed to swimmer. The exact penalty is described in the Meet Announcement, but typically the swimmer is removed from their next scheduled event.



SafeSport

Misconduct is a critical issue in sports, and one which we all play a part in preventing. **SafeSport** is the Olympic community's initiative to recognize, reduce, and respond to misconduct in sport. The six primary types of misconduct are

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional Misconduct
- Physical Misconduct, and
- Sexual Misconduct, including Child Sexual Abuse

USA Swimming is committed to fostering a fun, healthy, and safe environment for all its members, and in 2010 it formally implemented a comprehensive SafeSport program to respond to and prevent instances of abuse and misconduct within the sport of swimming. The program includes clear strict policies, member education, and empowerment of LSCs and clubs to create the best possible environments for all members.

As a part of SafeSport, all coaches and officials are required to undergo criminal background checks, and must successfully complete athlete protection training on a regular basis. USA Swimming provides clubs with model policies for adoption and implementation, including policies relating to travel, electronic communication, bullying, locker room monitoring, and photography.

Additionally USA Swimming has created “The Safe Sport Club Toolkit,” an online repository for tools and resources clubs can use to create a Safe Sport culture. New materials are added to this resource library on a regular basis.

Another critical part of SafeSport is education. Much of this is done at the club level, but additional training resources for athletes are available on the USA Swimming website: <https://www.usaswimming.org/articles-landing-page/2017/04/05/free-safe-sport-training-for-athletes>. Geared towards athletes 12 and older, this training features athletes speaking to athletes about healthy boundaries and what you should do if your boundaries are being crossed. There is also a discussion guide to help aid the conversation.

For younger swimmers, the Safe Sport Activity Book is available. (<https://www.usaswimming.org/articles-landing-page/2018/06/21/safe-sport-activity-book>) This 12 page Activity Book is designed for 6-11 year olds and includes games, puzzles, and other activities with a Safe Sport theme aimed at bringing awareness of Safe Sport to this age group and their parents.

All LSCs have a Safe Sport Chair, a local contact person for information and assistance. Mike O'Shaughnessy (PVSSafeSport@gmail.com) is the current Chair for Potomac Valley.

It is important for kids to hear that sexual, physical, and emotional misconduct are never okay. Whether it is for themselves or a friend, they need to know that it's safe and important to speak up.



Links to some intriguing articles for swim parents:

6 Tips for Conversations After Meets and Practice

<https://swimswam.com/6-tips-for-conversations-after-meets-and-practice/>

SafeSport Parent Toolkit

<https://resources.safesport.org/toolkits/Parent-Toolkit-Complete/index.html>

Air Quality ... It Takes a Village

<https://www.nspf.org/blog/air-quality-it-takes-village>

Top Qualities College Teams Want in Recruits

<https://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/news/top-qualities-college-teams-want-in-recruits/>

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