

Use of swimming goggles during swimming lessons

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

The advantages of wearing swimming goggles during prolonged swimming activity to reduce or prevent eye irritation, to improve vision through the water and for medical reasons, are well recognised and supported by the ISRM and ASA. However, if the pool water is maintained in good condition, it should not be necessary to wear goggles if bathers are likely to be in the water for only short periods such as a swimming lesson for beginners.

The use of goggles is not without its downsides:

- Many swimming teachers have a concern, supported by much of the literature on the teaching of swimming, that goggles should not be worn when children are being taught to swim. It is considered that part of the learning to swim experience is for a child to be able to deal with splashing in the face and the ability to open his/her eyes whilst the face is immersed and swim under water with confidence. Certainly these attributes would improve the child's ability to cope in a water related incident in a canal, pond or river.
- A further concern relates to the goggles themselves; there is a history of eye accidents firstly as a result of goggles being made of glass or breakable plastics and secondly during the putting on and taking off of goggles. There is a British Standard for the manufacture of goggles and the Standard includes the requirement that the packaging of the goggles should contain instructions regarding the putting on and removal and the possibility of an accident occurring if the correct procedures and care are not followed.
- Lastly not all goggles provide a watertight fit and in a teaching situation with small children, concentration and lesson time can be lost in trying to obtain a fit which leaks as little as possible.

It is difficult to provide guidelines to meet all situations but the ISRM/ASA advice is as follows:

- There are good reasons why swimming goggles should not be worn during swimming lessons; children and their parents/carers should be informed of these and children encouraged to take part in lessons without the use of goggles.
- It is recognised that for some children, however, medical or associated reasons necessitate the wearing of swimming goggles in order to participate and in these cases carers/parents should:
 - only purchase goggles that meet British Standards,
 - ensure that the goggles fit the child correctly,
 - ensure the child has received adequate instruction, prior to participation, as to the fitting and adjustment of goggles,
 - be aware that teachers will not be responsible for the fitting of goggles to the children.

British Standard BS 5883:1996 "Specification for surface swimming goggles" gives further detailed information in this area.

Institute of Sport and Recreation Management

Sir John Beckwith Centre for Sport, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU
Tel: 01509 226474 | Fax: 01509 226475 | info@isrm.co.uk | www.isrm.co.uk



Rushmere Hall Primary School
IPSWICH, SUFFOLK

Rushmere Hall Primary School
Lanark Road, Ipswich
Suffolk IP4 3EJ

Head teacher: Mr P. Stock
www.RushmereHallPrimarySchool.com
Telephone: 01473 726027

Safety information for parents regarding the use of swimming goggles

Dear Parent,

I understand that you have enquired about the use of swimming goggles during school swimming lessons because your child has a medical or associated reason which necessitates their wearing. This letter includes some relevant safety information and a reply slip which must be completed by parents wishing to authorise the school to allow their son or daughter to wear swimming goggles during school swimming lessons.

We are advised that although swimming goggles look harmless, they have been found to carry considerable risks. A small percentage of casual swimmers find the water in the swimming baths to be irritant due to chlorination, nitrogenous content, aniline dyes and general detritus, but the hazard to themselves and others of wearing goggles is probably far greater than the protection provided by wearing the goggles. We are advised that little medical benefit accrues from the use of goggles and we therefore advise parents and children not to use them other than in the circumstances mentioned above.

We would encourage any parent who has a child with an eye condition to seek medical advice from a doctor to ensure that they believe the wearing of goggles during swimming lessons is appropriate and will not worsen the condition.

It is considered that part of the learning to swim experience is for a child to be able to deal with splashing in the face and the ability to open their eyes whilst the face is immersed and swim under water with confidence. This experience would improve a child's ability to cope in a water related incident in a river, pond or canal.

Speed swimmers who undertake frequent, long periods of training and are exposed to excessive water friction may need to protect their conjunctivae. However, most children don't need this kind of protection during the normal short length of a swimming lesson. Please read the following points before authorising the school to allow your son/daughter to wear goggles.

Water safety and the use of swimming goggles

1. The parent **must** accept responsibility in writing for ensuring that the child understands the correct method of putting on the goggles and taking them off. Cold, slippery hands do not always grasp the fittings adequately and a catapult effect can result in eye trauma.

2. It is difficult to maintain accurately fitting eye protection and therefore, contact with the water in the swimming bath is almost inevitable.
3. The use of goggles when diving is dangerous due to the possibility of dislodgement on entering the water.
4. Some goggles are made of brittle plastic, glass or acrylic substances and in the event of any collision, may shatter resulting in serious injury and/or the deposit of hazardous material which is difficult to locate and remove from the swimming bath.
5. The British Standard for goggles (BS5883: 1996) includes the requirement that packaging of the goggles should contain instructions regarding the putting on and removal and the possibility of accident if the correct procedures are not followed.

If after considering these points, you wish to authorise the school to allow your child to wear goggles for school swimming lessons, please sign and return the slip on the next page.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Stock

Head teacher

Use of goggles reply slip

PLEASE RETURN TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE

1. I have received and read the letter entitled "Safety information for parents regarding the use of swimming goggles", including the water safety information..
2. I authorise the school to allow my son/daughter to wear swimming goggles for school swimming lessons because of _____
(please state medical or associated reason why and attach a doctor's note if applicable or evidence to support)
3. I accept responsibility for providing suitable goggles and for ensuring that my son/daughter understands the correct method of putting on the goggles and taking them off. I understand that the teacher will not be responsible for the fitting and adjustment of the goggles.
4. **I accept that members of staff may remove the goggles from my son/daughter, if they feel that the goggles are being used inappropriately or in a dangerous manner. Continual misuse will result in the child not being allowed to use goggles during lessons (unless the school has received a medical certificate from a doctor).**
5. **I accept that any accident or injury sustained using goggles will not be the responsibility of the school.**

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| Name of child | |
| Date of Birth | |
| Name of Class Teacher | |
| Name of Parent / Guardian | |
| Signature of Parent / Guardian | |
| Date | |

OFFICE USE

Take copy and file. Pass copy to swimming teacher. Swimming teacher to update records.