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# WABC focus

INFORMING AND INSPIRING REAL SWIMMING TEACHERS

## Aquamics™ Messages Through Water & Rhythm

*From presentation at WABC2007*

*Niko Saito is the owner of Saito Aquatic Academy. As a competitive swimmer she set a Japanese Jr. record. She has been teaching her trademarked AQUAMICS for 40 years. She is the first in Japan to teach baby swimming as part of child rearing. She is the author of "Baby Swimming", "Baby Swimming and Maternity Swimming" and others including—interestingly—history books. She has been honored for her achievements by WABC.*

**A**quamics is a specialized technique for teaching babies individual development through the use of water and rhythm.

The water component is physical activities in the pool. Rhythm is live music and mental learning.

*Cont'd on page 2*



Music and mental learning important parts of the Aquamics program for all young students at Saito Swim Academy in Nagoya, Japan. From the musical note cards children learn to recognize the length of a music note, learn to express with body language by listening at the same time to live (keyboard) music (outside of photo image) and to express through sense of sight, hearing and concentration.



Swim a lap at the World's largest pool—it's more than 915 meters / 1000 yards in length and recently built at a resort on Chile's southern coast.

## Aquamics™



### Water & Physical Environment

We are trying so hard! Children are blowing bubbles. Their movement through and under water stimulates brain activity. Adjusting to the water as a different environment give children a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

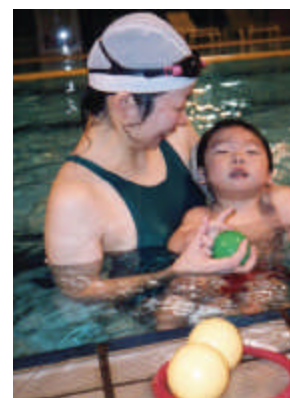
#### Pettanko

The shape is specifically designed so that the toddlers and infants can handle them easily. We have cards with flowers, animals and shapes to encourage recognition of nature and the environment. In this way too they learn Japanese customs and culture. The mothers interact with their children as they work with the variety of cards in various ways both in water and on deck.

#### Ball Games

Ball games are important to stimulate the peripheral nerve system at an early age. Stimulating finger tips results in the activation of the brain. Activities are structured so that the learn to recognize of colors and amounts / numbers. These are child and parent centered activities

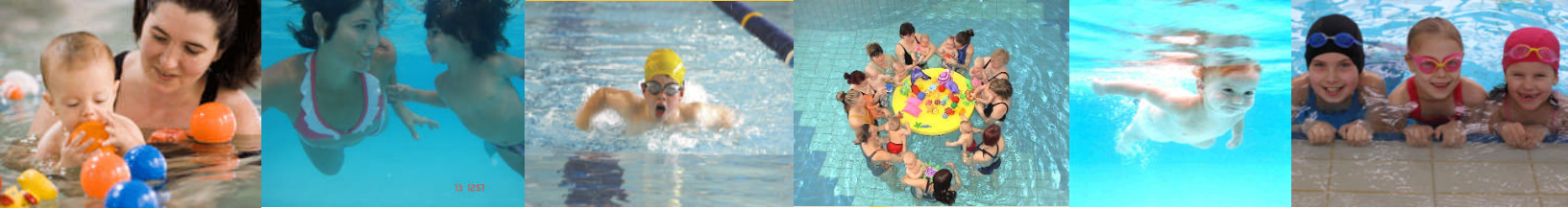
Children and parents participate together. We have a swim with daddy program which is a special program only for dads. In our regular program it is mothers who come with their children.



### Music & Mental Learning

#### Music Note Cards

With the use of music note cards students learn much. They learn to recognize the length of a musical note. They come to express



# Aquamics™

with their body language the live music that they hear that is provided live from a electric key-board and musician poolside. Students express themselves through what they see around the aquatic classroom and what they hear. They are often seen concentrating.

### Live Music Concerts

We arrange extra curricular programs outside of the Academy. We do this to provide the young students to experience “real” musicians with a variety of instruments and styles—classical, jazz.

### Music, Performance and Communication

Students (and parents) learn how to communicate with others and work along with others. There is a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. They recognize the results of practice. And of performing in front of an audience. There’s family involvement.

### Outcomes of Aquamics

- Human development
- Stimulation through touching skin, especially in the water, closely relates the five senses at an early age.
- Rhythm increases enjoyment and exercise ability.
- Making use of water and rhythm helps children grow mentally and physically.
- Aquamics is water exercise without any barriers combined with baby swimming with rhythms.

It is our responsibility to encourage each child to their ability. There is the power to strive through a child’s smile with water & rhythm. Aquamics can be used as a basis for the development of a child’s personality and vitality. ☺



## New Fecal Response Guidelines

**What do you do when you find poop in the pool?** Not what learn to swim program directors like to talk about even though it is a seldom occurrence. “Check with your various local, state or region regulatory agencies before using these guidelines. These recommendations do not replace existing regulations,” says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. These are revised recommendations just released by the Centers.

- These recommendations are for responding to fecal incidents in chlorinated recreational water venues.
- Improper handling of chlorine-based disinfectants can cause injury. Follow proper occupational safety and health requirements when following these recommendations.
- **Pool Closures:** Fecal incidents are a concern and an inconvenience to both pool operators and patrons. Pool operators should carefully explain to patrons why the pool needs to be closed in response to a fecal incident. Understanding that pool closure is necessary for proper disinfection and protection of the health and safety of swimmers is likely to promote support rather than frustration. Pool closures allow chlorine to do its job — to kill germs and help prevent recreational water illnesses (RWIs).

### Important Background Information

#### WHAT ARE RECREATIONAL WATER ILLNESSES (RWIs)?

What is the first thing that pops into your head when you think about water safety? Drowning? Slipping? Lightning? All good answers, and all are very important. But, did you know that germs can contaminate swimming water? These germs cause RWIs that have made many people sick.

RWIs are caused by germs such as “Crypto” (KRIP-toe), short for *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia* (gee-ARE-dee-uh), *E. coli* O157:H7, and *Shigella* (Shi-GEL-uh).

#### HOW ARE RWIs SPREAD?

RWIs are spread by swallowing pool water that has been contaminated with fecal matter. How? If someone has diarrhea, that person can easily contaminate the pool. Think about it. Pool water is shared by every swimmer. Really, it’s communal bathing water. It’s not sterile. It’s not drinking water.

The good news is that germs causing RWIs are killed by chlorine. However, chlorine doesn’t work right away. It takes time to kill germs and some germs like Crypto can live in pools for days. Even the best maintained pools can spread illness.

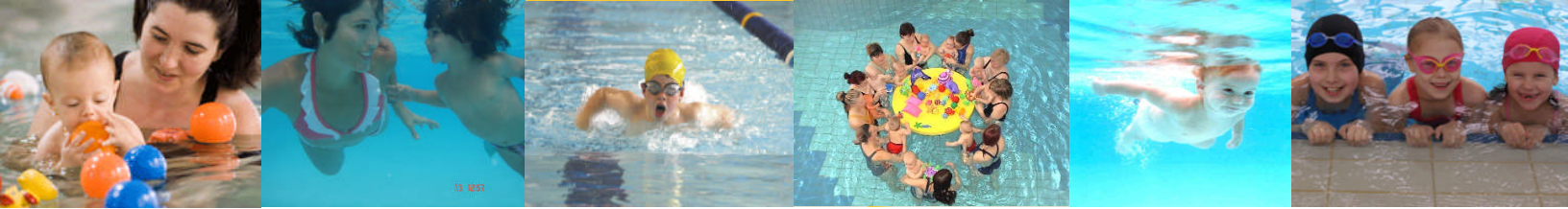
#### SHOULD ALL FECAL INCIDENTS BE TREATED THE SAME?

No. A diarrheal fecal incident is a higher-risk event than a formed-stool incident. With most diarrheal illnesses, the number of infectious germs found in each bowel movement decreases as the diarrhea stops and the person’s bowel movements return to normal. Therefore, a formed stool is probably less of a risk than a diarrheal incident that you may not see.

A formed stool may contain no germs, a few, or many that can cause illness. You won’t know. The germs that may be present are less likely to be released into the pool because they are mostly contained within the stool. However, formed stool also protects germs inside from being exposed to the chlorine in the pool, so prompt removal is necessary.

**Germ Inactivation Time for Chlorinated Water\***

Germ	Time
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 Bacterium	Less than 1 minute
Hepatitis A Virus	About 16 minutes
<i>Giardia</i> Parasite	About 45 minutes
Crypto Parasite	About 15,300 minutes or 10.6 days <sup>†</sup>



**SHOULD YOU TREAT A FORMED FECAL INCIDENT AS IF IT CONTAINS CRYPTO?**

No. In 1999, pool staff volunteers from across the United States collected almost 300 samples from fecal incidents that occurred at water parks and pools.<sup>1</sup> CDC then tested these samples for Crypto and *Giardia*. None of the sampled feces tested positive for Crypto, but *Giardia* was found in 4.4% of the samples collected. These results suggest that formed fecal incidents pose only a very small Crypto threat but should be treated as a risk for spreading other germs (such as *Giardia*). Remember a diarrheal fecal incident is considered to be a higher-risk event than a formed-stool fecal incident.

**Pool Disinfection Time**

How long does it take to disinfect the pool after a fecal incident? This depends on what type of fecal incident has occurred and at which free chlorine levels you choose to disinfect the pool. If the fecal incident is formed stool, follow Figure 1, which displays the specific time and free chlorine levels needed to inactivate *Giardia*. If the fecal incident is diarrhea, follow Figure 2, which displays the specific time and free chlorine levels needed to inactivate Crypto. - *Cont'd p. 6*

**Figure 1 *Giardia* Inactivation Time for a Formed-Stool Fecal Incident**

Free Chlorine Level (ppm)	Disinfection Time*
1.0	45 minutes
2.0	25 minutes
3.0	19 minutes


\* These closure times are based on 99.9% inactivation of *Giardia* cysts by chlorine at pH 7.5 or less and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher. The closure times were derived from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Disinfection Profiling and Benchmarking Guidance Manual. These closure times do not take into account "dead spots" and other areas of poor pool water mixing.

**Figure 2 Crypto Inactivation Time for a Diarrheal Fecal Incident**

Free Chlorine Level (ppm)	Disinfection Time*†
10	1,530 minutes (25.5 hours)
20	765 minutes (12.75 hours)
40	383 minutes (6.5 hours)

\* Shields JM, Hill VR, Amwood MJ, Beach MJ. Inactivation of *Cryptosporidium parvum* under chlorinated recreational water conditions. *J Water Health* 2008;8(3):513-20.

† At pH 7.5 or less and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher.



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## What to Do About . . .

### FORMED STOOL IN THE POOL?

Formed stools can act as a container for germs. If the fecal matter is solid, removing the feces from the pool without breaking it apart will limit the degree of pool contamination. In addition, RWIs are more likely to be spread when someone who is ill with diarrhea has a fecal incident in the pool.

### DIARRHEA IN THE POOL?

Those who swim when ill with diarrhea place other swimmers at significant risk for getting sick. Diarrheal incidents are much more likely than formed stool to contain germs. Therefore, it is important that all pool managers stress to patrons that swimming when ill with diarrhea is an unhealthy swimming behavior.

1. **For both formed-stool and diarrheal fecal incidents**, close the pool to swimmers. If you have multiple pools that use the same filtration system — all pools will have to be closed to swimmers. Do not allow anyone to enter the pool(s) until the disinfection process is completed.
2. **For both formed-stool and diarrheal fecal incidents**, remove as much of the fecal material as possible (for example, using a net or bucket) and dispose of it in a sanitary manner. Clean and disinfect the item used to remove the fecal material (for example, after cleaning, leave the net or bucket immersed in the pool during disinfection).

VACUUMING STOOL FROM THE POOL IS NOT RECOMMENDED.

3. Raise the free chlorine to 2 parts per million (ppm), if less than 2 ppm, and ensure pH 7.5 or less and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher. This chlorine concentration was selected to keep the pool closure time to approximately 30 minutes. Other concentrations or closure times can be used as long as the contact time (CT) inactivation value\* is achieved *See disinfection time chart.*

4. Maintain free chlorine concentration at 2 ppm and pH 7.5 or less for at least 25 minutes before reopening the pool. State or local regulators may require higher free chlorine levels in the presence of chlorine † stabilizers, which are known to slow disinfection. Ensure that the filtration system is operating while the pool concentration during the disinfection process

#### Establish a fecal incident log.

Document each fecal incident by recording date and time of the event, whether it involved formed stool or diarrhea, and the free chlorine and pH levels at the time or observation of the event. Before reopening the pool, record the free chlorine and pH levels, the procedures followed in response to the fecal incident (including the process used to increase chlorine levels if necessary), and the contact time.

3. If necessary, before attempting the hyperchlorination of any pool, consult an aquatics professional to determine the feasibility, the most optimal and practical methods, and needed safety considerations.

4. Raise the free chlorine concentration to 20 ppm¶,§ and maintain pH 7.5 or less and a temperature at 77°F (25°C) or higher. The free chlorine and pH should remain at these levels for at least 12.75 hours to achieve the CT inactivation value of 15,300.\*\* Crypto CT inactivation values are based on killing 99.9% of Crypto. This level of Crypto inactivation cannot be reached in the presence of 50 ppm chlorine stabilizer, even after 24 hours at 40 ppm free chlorine, pH 6.5, and a temperature of 77°F (25°C).†† Extrapolation of these data suggest it would take approximately 30 hours to kill 99.9% of Crypto in the presence of 50 ppm or less cyanuric acid, 40 ppm free chlorine, pH 6.5, and a temperature of 77°F (25°C) or higher.

5. Confirm that the filtration system is operating while the water reaches and maintains the reaches, and is maintained, at the proper chlorine level for proper free chlorine disinfection.

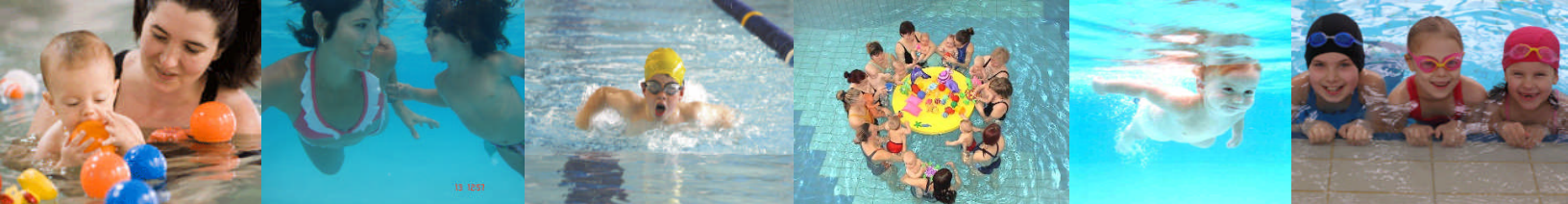
6. Backwash the filter after reaching the CT inactivation value. Be sure the effluent is discharged directly to waste and in accordance with state or local regulations. Do not return the backwash through the filter. Where appropriate, replace the filter media.

7. Allow swimmers back into the water only after the required CT inactivation value has been achieved and the free chlorine and pH levels have been returned to the normal operating range allowed by the state or local regulatory authority. ⚙️

Source for further details and to see footnotes:

<http://cdc.gov/healthyswimming/pdf/>

[Fecal Incident Response Recommendations for Pool Staff.pdf](#)



Centre

# Guide to Tantrums: Understanding, Preventing & Surviving Them

By Claire McCarthy, M.D., Harvard Health Publications

I've been there, too — in public with a small child who is screaming her brains out, as if someone is pulling her fingernails out one by one. Of my five children, Natasha was the most dramatic: Once I walked through Target pulling her along as she clung to my leg, letting the entire (huge) store know that she wanted the (very expensive) princess telephone. I know that feeling of anger, embarrassment, and desperation.



## Why Tantrums Happen

Tantrums are a normal part of childhood. They are most common in 1- to 3-year-olds, but sometimes older children have them. They usually happen because a child:

- **Gets frustrated.** Children ages one to three are learning to use language and their bodies. They become frustrated as they struggle to express themselves and when they can't do something they want to.
- **Gets upset.** Disappointment and anger can be very difficult feelings to deal with, especially for a small child.
- **Is asserting his or her independence.** This is the age when children begin to say no — sometimes purely for the sake of saying no.

## Some Children Are More Prone to Tantrums

While every child throws a tantrum at some point in their lives, some children are definitely more prone to them than others. My eldest, Michaela, hardly ever threw one; I thought I was doing everything right as a parent — until my next child came along and threw plenty of tantrums.

Here are the most common reasons why some children are more prone to tantrums:

- **Some kids get frustrated more often than others,** usually because they don't talk well enough to express themselves — or aren't yet physically able to do what they want to like running, climbing and reaching.
- **Temperaments vary.** Some children are simply more emotional, more stubborn (that's Natasha!), or have more trouble handling disappointment than others. It was Michaela's thoroughly easygoing temperament that made tantrums rare for her, as opposed to my parenting of her.
- **Some kids need more attention.** The attention they get for tantrums isn't really the kind they want, but it's attention.

**Tantrums work.** If you could get what you wanted by screaming, wouldn't you do it?

The key to preventing or diffusing tantrums is to understand a child's tantrum triggers, and understand what it feels like to be little and out of control. Here are some suggestions:

- **Avoid tantrum-provoking situations.** Use the candy-free check-out aisle at the supermarket. Toy shop when you can leave your child at home — and definitely don't take your child to the store or any other possibly challenging place when they are tired or hungry. Bring snacks whenever you go out if hunger is a trigger for your child. At home, keep things your child wants but can't have out (*cont'd p. 16*)



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# Early Water Stimulation

By Lana Whitehead, SwimKidsUSA

## When to Begin Swim Lessons

The baby has little perception of water other than the womb and his bath and the experiences were probably warm and positive. The infant has a very good chance to develop a good, healthy relationship with the water (Langendorfer and Bruya 1995). The early sensory experience of the skin coming in contact with the water aid in the child's overall organization of the nervous system. The more stimulation of nerves the child experiences the more interconnections and neuro-pathways develop in the brain cells (Miller and Melamed 1989). This explains why many studies have shown that children who have experienced early stimulation in water training develop earlier in many different ways.

## Early Water Stimulation Research

In countries such as Germany and Finland, studies have shown that children who swim early in life develop earlier physically. Scientific studies of infant swimming at the Swimming Institute of Munich Germany (1970 – 1974) and at the German Sports College Cologne (1974 – 1976) have shown that early stimulation develops the child in three key areas - physically, mentally and emotionally. As compared with a control group, which did not take year-round lessons, the children who swam consistently from infancy were significantly stronger and more coordinated. The children also scored higher for intelligence and problem-solving, which carried over into excellence and academic achievement.

Emotionally, children who swam year round from infancy were found to be more self-disciplined with greater self-control with an elevated confidence to succeed. From consistent goal setting and achievement, they rated high in self-esteem. Finally, the children in the "swimming group" were more independent and adjusted better to social situations than the subjects who belonged in the control groups (Federal Minister for Education and Science 1979).

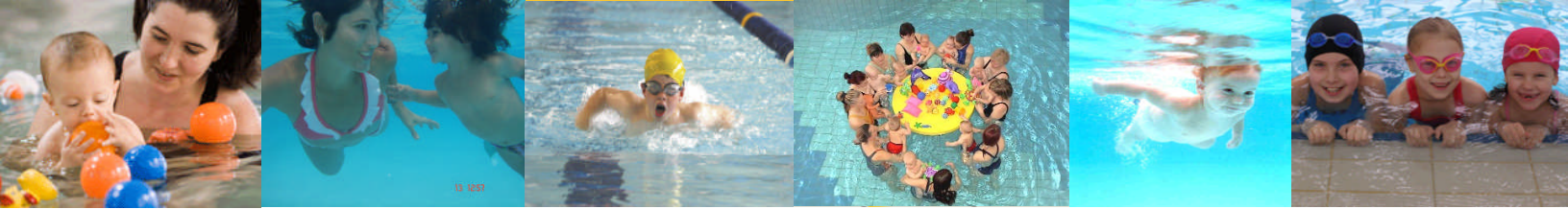
## Earlier Is Usually Better

We believe that children are born with a love for the water. The younger child is less influenced by negative attitudes. Parents who begin their child later on find it harder to get the child to feel comfortable on his back in the water. It often takes longer for the child to get use to the teacher, the water, all the people and to submersion. An older toddler often times has reached a "clingy" stage and is resistant to leaving the comfort of Mom or Dad's shoulder. It is easier for an infant to become accustomed to the water environment. However, it is better to start swim lessons when a child is a toddler or older than not at all (Rosengren 2004).

## Why Do Some Children Cry?

Children do not all react the same way when introduced to new situations. Swim lessons are no exception. Some toddlers explode with squeals and splashes while others shrink and cling. If your child seems intimidated by this new environment, it is very normal. New sights, new smells, new people that often over stimulate your child's nervous system. When he gets use to the new environment he will relax and look forward to his new adventure. (Langendorfer and Bruya 1995).





# SWIMkidz USA

Developing Safe, Confident, Happy Swimmers Since 1971

If your child cries during his lesson, it does not necessarily mean he is frightened of the water. It is usually some other factor that is upsetting him (Whitehead and Curtis 1983). Children can vary their moods quite quickly, they can laugh and cry within a short period. Small children can stop crying in a second, if distracted. All this can and will happen during a swim lesson just as it does in your home environment.

Hunger, boredom and fatigue are often the reasons for a child's mood swings. A different time might change the entire experience. A hungry and tired child is much more sensitive to changes and to new environments than a child who is rested and full (Rosengren 2004).

If you are ill at ease in the water or unsure of situation, your child will sense your feelings. He may manifest his stress by crying or clinging. Lighten your mood, bounce, play, sing and try to avoid any negative thoughts (Whitehead 1978)..

A child will often cry when he sees his Mother (or Father) sitting outside the pool. He becomes frustrated because he wants the security and comfort of being held by Mom (or Dad), so he cries. If the mother (father) is out of sight for a lesson or two the child will often calm down and become interested in the activities all around him. Periods of clinginess are normal. It is so much easier to be held rather than to try new things (Whitehead and Curtis 1983).

Being aware of your child's natural developmental stages will help you conquer feelings of discouragement. If you quit swimming because of your child's dissatisfaction, you merely strengthen his reluctance to ever enter swim lessons again. It won't magically get better in a year or so. You need to give your child the closeness and security he needs right now in this new situation. Hang in there with your child. Reward any little success, so that his positive experiences outweigh the negative. Keep encouraging your child to experience these new activities and environment. Your persistence will pay off and you and your child will enjoy many years of water fun in the future (Whitehead and Curtis 1983).

## Why Swim Year Round

Many swim schools have early childhood swim programs. There are many advantages to organized courses. A group feeling builds among the participants and your child will soon feel at home in the class setting. He will get use to strangers and mingling with other children. His social confidence will be strengthened as he is exposed to new environments and tries new things. However, it is important to have a continuity in swimming sessions since a small child can easily forget what he has learned if he swims less than once a week or takes long breaks in between sessions. Swimming is a lifelong skill that improves with practice. Year round swimming is necessary to allow a child to build on his skills without regression found in summer programs (Whitehead 1978). ☺



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## STROKES OF LUCK

Young Near-Drowning Victim Wary of Water  
But Taking Swimming Lessons

By Gary White THE LAKELAND (Fla.) LEDGER

It could have been a scene from any public swimming pool anywhere in the country. A 4-year-old girl in a pink and yellow flowered bathing suit stretched out stiffly as a well-tanned instructor balanced the girl on the water's surface.

As the teacher moved farther from the pool's edge, the girl gave a yelp and lifted her hands upward to feel for the woman behind her.

"I've got you," the teacher said. "Keep your hands at your sides."

As the teacher, Dayna Sechrest, delivered the girl to the edge of the Simpson Pool in Lakeland, Florida, she said, "You floated by yourself for a second."

Sechrest raised her palm above the water, and Honesty Bartley slapped her much smaller hand against it and smiled.

The triumphant moment contrasted with a previous episode involving the Lakeland girl and water. Two years ago, Honesty nearly drowned after plunging into a neighbor's pool. Her personal history gave a deeper dimension to the fear of water many children must overcome when they are learning to swim.

"I'm pretty sure she remembers what happened," Sechrest said. "The way she acts, you can just tell."

Honesty took part in an eight-session swim class at Simpson Pool that finished Thursday. She attended at no charge through a city scholarship program.

"She has really come far since she began," said Stephanie Dickens, who brought Honesty to the lessons as part of a summer camp program she runs at her home. "It is touching to me that she really had the desire to get in the pool again."

The incident that nearly cost Honesty her life happened June 4, 2006, at the home of Dickens' sister, not far from the Simpson Park Community Center in northwest Lakeland. Honesty was playing with Dickens' niece, Arkuria Lewis, then 3, when the girls wandered into the back yard, where Arkuria's family had an above-ground pool.

As the girls sat on the edge, Honesty plunged into the water.

"I think she probably jumped in, knowing Honesty," Amelia Jones said of her headstrong daughter.

Honesty sank to the bottom, and Arkuria ran inside to get her parents. Dickens said Arkuria's father pulled Honesty from the pool, and her mother, Sarvarie Boyd, a nurse, performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

An emergency medical crew arrived, and Honesty was rushed by helicopter to the trauma unit at St. Joseph's Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Jones said her daughter was in serious condition for two days.

"She was just a vegetable, just laying there with tubes coming all out of her nose and mouth and everything," said Jones, 24.

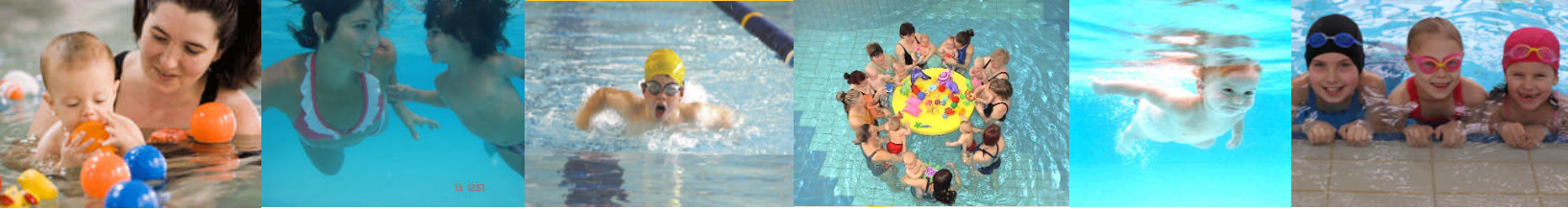
Within days, Honesty made a full recovery, and doctors told Jones there was no evidence of brain damage.

Despite the harrowing incident, Jones said her daughter didn't develop a complete aversion to water. She has returned to the same pool where she nearly drowned, though Jones makes sure she is always closely supervised.

Even so, Jones wanted to make sure her daughter received proper swimming instruction, and she welcomed the chance to enroll Honesty in the lessons at Simpson Pool. Jones stayed away the first day to avoid distracting her daughter, and the early reports were not promising.



Honesty Bartley, now 4, and her mother Amelia Jones stand in front of the above-ground pool where Honesty nearly



"The first week it was a lot about trust; she had to start trusting me," said Sechrest, 20, a student at Warner Southern College. "She would grip on me tight. I'd say, 'Loosen up; let's be friends. Loosen up and hold onto my shoulders.' I tell her all the time, 'I'm not going to let anything happen.'"

After the first session, Honesty told her teacher she wouldn't be returning. Yes you will, the unfailingly cheery teacher replied.

Sechrest said she allowed Honesty to ride on her back until she grew more comfortable in the water, the same technique she uses with other kids who exhibit fear.

Honesty's progress was apparent by her sixth session on Tuesday morning. At the start of class, she sat with another girl and two boys on the ledge of the pool as Sechrest faced them in the 4-foot-deep water. The teacher called for the kids to drop into the water, holding the edge, and do "10 bobs," thrusting their faces below the surface and blowing out air.

Honesty, a skinny girl with tightly braided hair, twice fainted doing the exercise, not quite putting her face into the water. Sechrest called her on it, and Honesty responded by taking a huge gulp of air and dropping her face into the pool for a moment.

Sechrest later had the children sit on the ledge and do "ice cream scoops," practicing their strokes with elbows held high and palms cupped. And the kids did Superman glides, stretching their arms forward and pushing off the wall toward Sechrest as they kicked their feet. The two boys, who appeared older, had no problem gliding 8 feet off the wall, but Sechrest moved much closer for Honesty's turn. Even then, the teacher had to coax the girl into the water before pulling her along the surface.

"You've got to blow bubbles out of that nose," Sechrest said.

"Hey, I saw something down in the water," Honesty answered.

Overall, Honesty seemed somewhat intimidated by the vastness of the Olympic-sized pool but less so than another girl in the class, who cried whenever she had to enter the water.

"She still has some times when you know she's scared, but we're working through it," Sechrest said. "She's so much better in the water. She'll jump to me. It seems like she has a lot more fun. She'll have smiles on her face now."

In contrast to the first day, when Honesty vowed not to return, Sechrest said by the second week she left each day excitedly promising to be back the following day.

Asked what she likes about swimming lessons, Honesty said, "She makes us do ice cream scoops and Superman."

As proof of Honesty's progress, Jones said her daughter is constantly asking for new bathing suits. Jones has bought her four since the lessons began.

Does she have a favorite? "All of them is my favorite," Honesty said.

And Jones plans to make one more purchase for her daughter: a kiddie pool. 🏠



Teacher Dayna Sechrest gives support and confidence that Honesty Bartley builds on.



## Aquatic Consulting Services

Alison Osinski is the principal-owner of Aquatic Consulting Services, located in San Diego, California, specializing in aquatic risk management, and aquatic facility design, management and operation. Services include: site inspections, pool design and renovation projects, staff screening and selection, lifeguard audits, expert testimony, equipment specification and testing, solutions to water and facility problems, pool operator training and certification courses, and water quality analysis.

Alison Osinski Ph.D. website: [www.AlisonOsinski.com](http://www.AlisonOsinski.com)  
 Tel. (619) 602-4435 [Alison@AlisonOsinski.com](mailto:Alison@AlisonOsinski.com)  
 1220 Rosecrans Street #915 San Diego, California 92106 USA

## Teaching a Child to Swim - Thoughts From an Olympian

By Scott Goldblatt

Founder of [Timed Finals](#). He is a two-time Olympian (2000 and 2004) for the United States, and has won two Olympic medals. In addition to Timed Finals, he co-hosts Deck Pass with [Nathan Jendrick](#). Scott lives in Kansas City with his wife and daughter and is the General Manager of [timedfinals.com](#) and [deckpass.com](#). Text as published online by [Timed Finals](#)



I am often asked, “*how do you teach your child to swim*”? Is it because I won two Olympic medals and have a daughter? Does this combination make me a perfect candidate for teaching her swimming? The truth is that if you had asked me this question months, if not, days before her birth, I would not have had an answer for you. But over the past 18 months, I have researched, gotten tips from others and have watched a video [My first 15 months of Aquatic Life](#) (by Robert Strauss of Swim Gym in Miami)

But what, you ask, are my secrets?

My secret is that I have do not have any secrets. Teaching your child to swim allows you some quality time with them. For me, every Saturday morning is a time for my daughter and me to splash, run, and cruise through the water together. The time together is indispensable and of course it puts her in the water which is a plus for me whether we are actually swimming or not.

*But what if my child (or the student) is scared?*

Most children have a natural fear of water. It is an unknown, and this is one reason why I allow my daughter to do what she wants - so that she can learn what the water is all about at her own pace. I let her wear my goggles, tote around a kickboard and put fins on her hands. These things make her comfortable and make the water fun for her, and for me, this is the first step in the process.

As with most children, my daughter is afraid to put her face in the water.

This fear makes sense to many parents for two reasons:

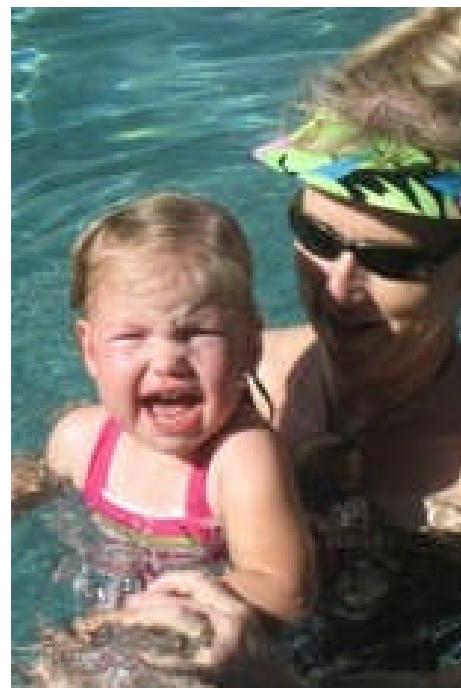
1. Water gets in their eyes, up their noses, and in their ears, and
2. They cannot breathe.

It is natural that they are afraid, but it is my “*job*” as a teacher to help them conquer this fear - yeah, sure. First and foremost **never** try to force children to put their faces in the water. This tactic is likely to make your child even more afraid of water. Teaching swimming is a game of trust. Yes, there is a certain level of “*force*” involved, but I call it gentle coaxing - it eases the atmosphere.

I was taught through research to never throw your child into the deep end and expect them to swim, even if that is the way you were taught. There are many programs out there, that promote this learning technique. They talk about teaching your child “*survival*” skills. While they may work, teaching your child, to me, is about teaching them a love of the water and a respect for it at the same time.

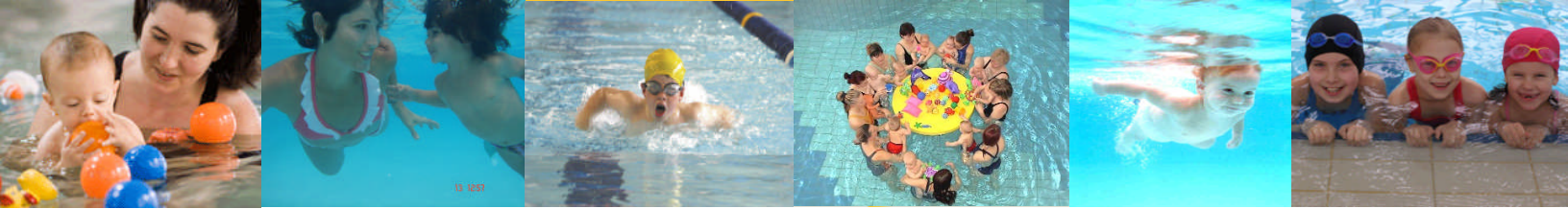
Teaching your child to put their face in without force is an art. It is about being patient with them. My solution? I blow bubbles. What? Just what I said - I blow bubbles. Why? My daughter thinks it is hilarious. My daughter, like many children, hates water on her face, but the connection is not there when I get her to blow bubbles. To her, having her face in the water is now fun, and for me, I have just been successful in getting her to put her face in the water.

This is the first step that I have taken with my daughter. Now it is on to more advanced tricks like floating and then actual swimming. I advocate taking classes with a professional if you are not comfortable yourself in the water. It will give you invaluable tips for teaching your child and interacting



Children express their perceptions.

... cont'd



## ... and comments by others

with them in the water. Even my wife and my daughter have taken classes together. Why? It may be more comfortable for my wife who does not have the swimming background I have, but it certainly does not diminish the quality time you get with your child or the skills that you and your child can learn.

As we move along in this learn to swim process, you will know first as to how I taught my daughter to swim. 🌀

### Comments

#### Comment by Debra Terry

Thanks for the article. It sounds like you and your daughter have a ball in the pool.

However, some of your statements are just wrong.

Children do not have a natural fear of the water!

Babies have a natural response underwater called the mammalian diving reflex. This means a baby will naturally hold their breath when submerged. This reflex is at it's strongest in small babies, and lasts through the first year.

The sooner a baby is introduced to water after birth the more natural the transition is.

I slipped my daughter under water during her first bath - to see if the mammalian reflex was true - and she did not even recognise a difference in environment.



#### Comment by Ralph Wright

Scott, you are right. Debra, you are only partially right and more importantly dangerously wrong. Some people will understand Debra's comments to mean an infant can survive in the water unsupported which obviously it can not. Further, others will take infants to the pool and 'drop' them into the water allowing to sink, then thrash in panic, then inhale water, then maybe worse before pulling the child out. Too many babies have drowned as parents or others allow them to fall into pools or baths unguarded. Please people, listen to Scott. Pools are not the womb; there is no umbilical cord.

#### Comment by Debra Terry

Ralph, I understand that your comment are made with only the best of intentions.

If, as you say, it is obvious that that an infant cannot survive in the water unsupported, why would you purport that "some people" would think that infants could?

I think it will ease your mind to review the statistics sited on the referenced URL. ...cont'd p. 14



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## comments cont'd

"- babies are 'natural' water creatures and, therefore, that they need to "go back" to water " - or not.

### Cont'd Comment by Debra Terry

...You will find no instances of infants having drowned as a result of "dropping" them into a pool, allowing them to sink, thrash in panic and inhaling water.

The statistics cited at the referenced URL are from the U. S. Government Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Excerpt:

#### 'Risk Factors

Children under age one most often drown in bathtubs, buckets, or toilets (Brenner et al. 2001).

Among children ages 1 to 4 years, most drownings occur in residential swimming pools (Brenner et al. 2001). Most young children who drowned in pools were last seen in the home, had been out of sight less than five minutes, and were in the care of one or both parents at the time (Present 1987).'

My point is only that babies are not born with an inherent fear of being under water.

### More Comment by Scott Goldblatt

Note: The URL Debra mentions is for the [Center for Disease Control](#).

### More Comment by Ralph Wright

Debra, periodically it is fashionable for people to think that babies are 'natural' water creatures and, therefore, that they need to "go back" to water reflecting the baby's 'true nature'. Major publications over the years have shown babies submersed in the water peering at the cameras as though that were the most natural thing in the world. Whereas you and I as knowledgeable swimmers and coaches/instructors (and parent and grandparent in my case) would never do such a thing and would always be with the baby supporting it, numerous others not so cognizant of the water have, in fact, emulated the pictures to the detriment and possible fatal harm of the infant. Home pools (we had one) and other pools at which the parents are with the infant are obviously potentially dangerous to the infant. Surely you don't think the CDC has collected data on every drowning? Scott is trying to help us teach a young child to swim. I agree with his approach. You favor a more controversial approach.

### Comment by Hanna

Debra, I am a lifeguard at a YMCA, and I can tell you that while, immediately a child may instinctively hold their breath they do not have the lung capacity, nor the ability to hold their breath for any length of time. Forcing, or dropping your child into a pool, is almost certainly asking for an emergency situation to occur. I've pulled one infant, and two six year olds from the pool in my career, all because parents dropped them in or weren't paying attention and let them fall in. After the initial holding of the breath a child panics and then begins gasping, swallowing air as he or she drowns.

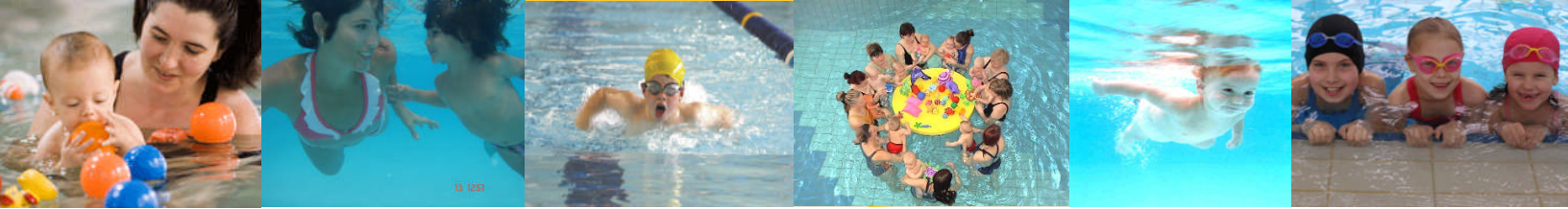
### Comment by Jafet Ramirez

Never try to have your infant hold their breath under water. there are trained professionals that prepare for this type of event.

Unless told otherwise by a trusted medical/swimming water safety instructor/lifeguard official... please be with your child supporting it during during its swim learning years. Please refer to the red cross for an easy reference as to how to teach my child how to swim programs. Teaching a child to swim is not as hard as you think,

### Comment by Desiree

I have to tell you the mammalian diving reflex is 100% true babies do instinctively hold their breath and while their lung capacity may not be fully developed if u work with that instinct your baby can learn to swim before they reach a year of age! i have seen it on more than one occasion and on a few occasions in my own family. Children do not have a natural fear of water, they have a natural love of it. after a year the reason they fear it is because they no longer remember the womb and lose the reflex unless you use it while they are growing. ☺



# Learning to swim by the songbook

By Nicholas Roe



**A**melia Urry is just three years old but she can already swim five metres of the pool without a helping hand and is improving by the day. And if you ask her mother, Sharlene, how Amelia managed to absorb these skills so early... she reaches for a songbook.

This toddler is one of a growing number of water-babes who have learnt to swim through musical beat and rhythm, thanks to a new scheme from Speedo that turns ordinary nursery rhymes into poolside survival manuals. Already tested in classes all over Britain, **Swim a Song** is now being launched for home use, with the message that swimming lessons can begin virtually from birth, in your own bathroom, with a giggle and song. The scheme hinges on one crucial fact: babies learn quicker through music because it helps overcome instinctive fears, which are the biggest swimming obstacle for any age. For years teachers have known that music can calm tots faced with water. But the new scheme adds a much more formal structure to the theory, matching words and beat to specific swimming actions - from a very young age.

After some weeks of musical splashing, turning and dunking in the bath, the child is introduced to the swimming pool at around four months

She set to work on 32 songs - testing them on her own daughter, Amelia - aided by business partner Jane Wilson. Together they developed a system which was promptly snapped up by more than 400 swimming pools. Now they are making the same general technique directly available to parents, starting at bath time.

Even approaching the water has its own song. To the tune of Sing a Song of Sixpence, the lyric runs: "Swim a song in water/Have a real good time/Lots of happy children/Clapping waving fine..." When it comes to touching the water, the theme tune is a rewritten Three Blind Mice, starting with the words: "Dip toes in/Dip toes out." Other songs cover issues such as kicking, breathing, turning and submerging. What's sung in the bathroom is later sung in the pool, forming a familiar bridge that speeds the child towards more advanced strokes.

There are safety tips too. A booklet reminds parents never to enter the pool while holding a child (place the baby on a mat and get in first). Take a friend along to help. Make sure buoyancy aids fit well (though they're not worn the whole time).

It's all simple, but potentially life-saving, given that almost 450 people drown in Britain each year.

Urry is supported by the Amateur Swimming Association and by Steve Parry, winner of a 200m butterfly Olympic bronze in Athens in 2004. Parry himself almost drowned as a seven-year-old after falling from a holiday barge into the Thames. His own swimming lessons began straight after that near-tragedy. Now in charge of a swimming events company called Total Swimming, Parry says: "Confidence is the key issue. Get them involved from an early age and they don't realise it's an issue at all. And music brings a fun element and helps in the learning."



A sing-along swim-a-song: Sharlene Urry and three-year-old daughter Amelia (right) and Scarlett (2) splash in the pool at the GL1 Leisure Centre in Gloucester, UK.

It's a point acknowledged by psychologists. Dr Janine Spencer, director of the Centre for Research in Infant Behaviour at Brunel University, says: "Babies respond more to music than the voice - they prefer maternal singing to maternal speaking. It does transfer to physical skills."

Urry offers three rules to parents hoping to ease their children's route to the water: "One, enjoy your time with your child. Two, start them off at bath time. Three, introduce them to the water young. It all improves a child's confidence. They then learn quicker."

Some mums and dads might balk at the idea of publicly singing: "Here we go round the swimming pool," to the tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush. But parenthood involves sacrifices.

Swim a Song parent packs, containing a 32-song CD, songbook, advice and baby changing towel, cost £15.99 from Speedo (0115 910 5267; [www.totalswimming.co.uk](http://www.totalswimming.co.uk)).

## Tantrums . . . Cont'd from page 7

... of sight. When it comes to tantrums, a little advance planning goes a long way.

- **Spend positive time together.** Dedicate some time every day to snuggling and playing with your child. (Reading together is a great way to snuggle!) Even if it doesn't totally prevent tantrums, it is good for your child—and for your relationship with her.
- **Let your child feel in control.** Obviously, you are in charge. But when you can, give your child choices. Instead of saying "Time to get dressed!" say "Do you want to wear the blue shirt or the green one?" Instead of "Time to go to bed!" try "Which book shall we read before bed — this one, or that one?" (Limiting the choices to two is generally best.) When you do that, your child is less likely to feel bossed around—and is therefore less likely to struggle with you.
- **Use distraction.** It's amazing how well this can work, if you do it at the first sign of trouble. Before your child gets really upset about not being able to play with a particular toy, swoop in with a different one and make a big deal out of it ("Wow, look at this truck! It makes noises and everything!"). Quickly suggest playing on the slide when someone gets to the last swing before you. Sometimes doing something really unexpected, such as breaking into song, or doing the Chicken Dance, does the trick. Take advantage of your child's short attention span.

If all else fails and your child explodes into a tantrum, don't despair. Here's how to survive it:

- **Take a deep breath.** If you get upset, it's only going to make things worse.
- **Resist the temptation to give in.** Giving your child what she wants may quiet things down right then, but teaching your child that tantrums work is not the way to get them to stop.
- **Let your child scream it out, in a safe place.** That may mean leaving the nearly full grocery cart in the store and going home. If your child is older, send him to his room; let him know that he can come out as soon as he calms down.
- **Give hugs when he's done.** It can be scary for a child to get that upset — and they usually know that you're not happy with them. Let him know that you love him, and that you are proud of him for stopping.

While tantrums are usually nothing to worry about, and will go away as a child gets older, it's important to call your child's doctor for help if:

- The tantrums are getting more frequent, or severe
- Your child is in mid- to late- elementary school and still having tantrums
- Your child hurts herself or others during the tantrum
- You have any concerns about your child's development
- You are very upset by the tantrums, especially if you feel like you might hurt your child

Don't feel ashamed — the best thing you can do is ask for help! ☺

## Celebrity Teachers & Directors

### Around the World

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Jim Reiser, the Swim Professor, and head of the [Swim Lessons Company](#) appears at one of his outdoor locations around Columbia and Elgin, South Carolina, USA.