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Welcome to Red Cross Swim

Welcome to Red Cross Swim, a comprehensive swimming and water safety continuum. Each year our program is taught to 1.2 million Canadians, making it the largest swimming program in Canada.

There are extraordinary benefits to swimming:

- Swimming is a fundamental movement skill that builds overall **motor skills**. Children need to develop these foundational skills as part of long-term athletic development. Participating in Red Cross Swim lessons will assist your child to master the fundamentals of agility, balance, coordination, speed, and rhythmic movement. These skills will prepare your child for a future active lifestyle.
- Health Canada considers swimming to be one of the key physical skills. From a **fitness** perspective, swimming is a complete physical activity that engages all muscle groups and helps develop strong bodies, good posture, endurance, and flexibility. There is also a low risk of injury when swimming since there is minimal stress on bones and joints. Therefore, many athletes augment their training with swimming.
- Among the most notable **health benefits**, swimming helps improve circulation and respiration (i.e., it improves the body's use of oxygen without overworking the heart) and, as a stress reducer, it has an overall feel-good effect on the mind and body. As a regular activity, it also helps manage weight.
- Swimming opens the doorway to a lifetime of **complementary aquatic activities** and sports such as synchronized swimming, speed swimming, water polo, diving, and surfing.
- Swimming is a skill that can **save lives**—your own and others if in a distress situation.
- Swimming is simply a **fun** recreational activity that individuals and families alike can enjoy.

All of the above make us consider swimming as a fundamental skill that every individual should master.

Red Cross Swim News: Overview



We built our program continuum, Red Cross Swim, on three pillars:

- 1. Swimming:** Participants learn the five main swimming strokes (front crawl, back crawl, elementary backstroke, breast stroke, and sidestroke) and develop effective stroke techniques using logical progressions and proven teaching strategies.
- 2. Skills and Water Safety:** Based on our research, most drownings that occur are preventable incidents. Our skills and water safety knowledge components focus on self-rescue skills and safe behaviour to prevent injuries.
- 3. Fitness:** Each program level includes activities to build endurance and promote individual success while encouraging lifelong physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.

During the development process of our program, we always keep our participants in mind. Red Cross Water Safety Instructors are trained to adapt the program skills to each individual swimmer's needs, helping all participants achieve their personal best in swimming and fitness.

History of the Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety Program

The Canadian Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety Program began more than 60 years ago as a response to the high number of injuries and deaths caused by water. The Red Cross recognized it was just as important for swimmers to learn water safety as it was for them to learn swimming skills. Together, these two components would be the most effective way to prevent water-related injuries.

Our Swimming and Water Safety goal is to *improve quality of life by giving people the skills to make safe choices, prevent injuries, act in emergency and rescue situations, and to increase participant's physical fitness.*

Since its launch, the Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety Program has been evolving to meet the changing needs of Canadians and has expanded to include new ages and components. Red Cross Swim is unique—it considers each swimmer's needs, interests and skills, and offers programs for participants of all ages and abilities (e.g., Preschool, Kids, and Adults and Teens). Participants learn key swimming strokes and skills, essential water safety and injury prevention information, and how to enjoy the water safely. By doing this, the Red Cross believes we can make Canadians safer in, on, and around the water and reduce drownings and water-related injuries.



Why water safety education in addition to skills?

According to data provided by Statistics Canada, drowning was the fourth most common cause of death by unintentional injury during 1991–2000 and the leading cause of death for recreational and sporting activities. From 1991–2000, 5,900 individuals died and 3,289 were hospitalized for near drowning¹. Sadly, many of these deaths could have been prevented by using the right equipment and an injury prevention approach to attitude, knowledge, and skills.

The Red Cross Swim program teaches swimmers how to stay safe in, on, and around the water, how to minimize their risk of injury and safely enjoy aquatic activities. These lessons and themes are integrated throughout the program through age-appropriate topics, and games and activities that facilitate comprehension and learning.



¹ The Canadian Red Cross. *Drownings and Other Water-Related Injuries in Canada: 10 Years of Research, Module 1 Overview*. 2006. Available at www.redcross.ca/swim.

What to expect in the Red Cross Swim programs

Red Cross Swim is built around an **individualized approach to teaching**, which encourages each swimmer to improve and strive for his or her personal best. Children learn through age-appropriate teaching methods that accommodate all learner rates and styles.

Instructors keep their swimmers active and wet using three methods of teaching:

1
2
3

Direct method used to teach skills with specific steps such as stroke correction for swimmers.

Discovery method used to teach skills with a specific purpose such as learning how to float in a position that is comfortable to the swimmer.

Games used to practice skills, reinforce safety knowledge, and build endurance. Games are an effective way to teach children water orientation and introduce and develop swimming and water safety skills. Games reduce anxiety, facilitate learning, increase participation, and help swimmers enjoy the water. Our Instructors use games and activities that suit the ages, interests, and abilities of the swimmers.

The Instructor's goal is to help each swimmer succeed by planning enjoyable activities that build on what he or she can do already, and by providing the feedback participants need to encourage the learning process. Using logical progressions, corrective teaching techniques and positive feedback, your child will develop swimming skills and learn how to enjoy the water safely.



Continuous evaluation to ensure success

The Red Cross Swim programs use continuous evaluation, a process of constantly monitoring the progress of each child and recording an item as complete when the child meets the minimum standards for that item.

The continuous evaluation allows the focus to remain on the individual child at all times instead of applying a standard test for all swimmers at the end of each level.

Our Instructors recognize each swimmer's needs and abilities, consider the steps required to improve his or her performance, and provide opportunities for each swimmer to be included in every activity to the best of his or her ability.

Your child will be constantly challenged to learn and develop skills and will continually improve throughout the lessons.



Red Cross Swim News: Overview



Program goals

Program	Goals
<p>Red Cross Swim Preschool</p> <p>Children ages four months to six years old and their parents or caregivers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ For every child and caregiver in the program to have fun, play, learn introductory swimming skills, and learn how to stay safe in, on, and around the water. ■ Create a nurturing, positive environment that promotes learning. ■ Reinforce the importance of play as a learning tool for this age group. ■ Encourage the use of songs, games, and a variety of stimulating equipment and toys to enhance learning.
<p>Red Cross Swim Kids</p> <p>Children ages five and older. Most swimmers will complete all levels by age 12 if they take lessons regularly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ For school-aged children to learn five basic swimming strokes and how to stay safe in, on, and around water. ■ Build swimming ability and strokes through a series of progressions. ■ Enhance learning through discovery and games and encourage active participation in the water. ■ Create a positive learning environment by helping swimmers progress and achieve personal bests.
<p>Red Cross Swim @ School</p> <p>School-aged children six years and older.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offer schools a learn-to-swim program that meets the educational curriculum for fitness and education programs, and fits school timetables. ■ Encourage all participants to learn swimming skills and water safety. ■ Create a positive learning environment that allows participants of all levels of ability to participate. ■ Promote fitness and basic safety skills and knowledge.
<p>Red Cross Swim Program for Adults and Teens</p> <p>Adults and teens who want to learn to swim, improve their swimming skills, or try aquatic sports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop swimming skills by introducing aquatic activities and sports according to each swimmer's interests and ability. ■ Provide water safety skills and knowledge according to each swimmer's interests and ability. ■ Create a positive learning environment by helping swimmers set and achieve personal goals. ■ Provide encouragement and flexible opportunities for swimmers to continue enjoying aquatic activities.
<p>Assistant Water Safety Instructor Course</p> <p>Individuals 15 years and older. This course is the prerequisite for the Water Safety Instructor Course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce candidates to the fundamentals of instructing by focusing on the theoretical knowledge that supports learning and teaching. ■ Guide the knowledge and skills needed to become an Assistant Water Safety Instructor by focusing on teaching methods, learning styles, physical principles, progressions, communication, safety supervision, and feedback. ■ Provide the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate and be evaluated on their understanding of skills and knowledge through practical teaching experience and hands-on assignments.
<p>Water Safety Instructor Course</p> <p>Individuals 15 years and older. Prerequisite: Assistant Water Safety Instructor Course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prepare candidates to instruct the Red Cross Swim programs with a focus on strategies to introduce and develop swimming and water safety skills in all levels. ■ Teach candidates how to effectively plan, develop, and evaluate swimming and water safety skills. ■ Provide candidates with the opportunity to apply their teaching skills and knowledge through teaching experience.