

## PREVENTING SWIMMING INJURIES

Each year, almost 150,000 swimming-related injuries are treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers the following tips to prevent swimming injuries:

- Always take time to warm up and stretch. Research studies have shown that cold muscles are more prone to injury. Warm up with jumping jacks, stationary cycling or running or walking in place for 3 to 5 minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch, holding each stretch for 30 seconds.
- Learn how to swim and do not swim alone. Swim in supervised areas where lifeguards are present. Inexperienced swimmers should wear lifejackets in the water.
- Do not attempt to swim if you are too tired, too cold, or overheated.
- Avoid diving into shallow water. Each year approximately 1,000 disabling neck and back injuries occur after people went headfirst into water which was shallow or too murky to see objects.
- Swim in a pool only if you can see the bottom at the deepest point; check the shape of the full diving area to make sure it is deep enough.
- Dive only off the end of a diving board. Do not run on the board, try to dive far out, or bounce more than once. Swim away from the board immediately after the dive, to allow room for the next diver. Make sure there is only one person on the board at a time.
  
- When swimming in open water, never run and enter waves headfirst. Make sure the water is free of undercurrents and other hazards.
- Do not swim in a lake or river after a storm if the water seems to be rising or if there is flooding because currents may become strong. The clarity and depth of the water may have changed, and new hazards may be present.
- Check weather reports before going swimming to avoid being in the water during storms, fog, or high winds. Because water conducts electricity, being in the water during an electrical storm is dangerous.
- Remember that alcohol and water don't mix. Alcohol affects not only judgment, but it slows movement and impairs vision. It can reduce swimming skills and make it harder to stay warm.
- Be knowledgeable about first aid and be able to administer it for minor injuries, such as facial cuts, bruises, or minor tendinitis, strains, or sprains.
- Be prepared for emergency situations and have a plan to reach medical personnel to treat injuries such as concussions, dislocations, elbow contusions, wrist or finger sprains, and fractures.