

# Red Cross Swim News: *Preschool (4-36 mths)*



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Welcome to Red Cross Swim Preschool, our learn-to-swim program for children ages four months to six years old, and their parents or caregivers. Lessons are designed to be fun, using lots of songs, games, and themes. The first three levels of Red Cross Swim Preschool, **Starfish** (4–12 months), **Duck** (12–24 months), and **Sea Turtle** (24–36 months) focus on water orientation and water safety. Sea Turtle may be offered as parented or unparented.

## What to expect

Check with your facility **prior to the first lesson**. Inquire about swimming attire, what to bring, and any other practical details.

As a parent or caregiver, you have an important role to play **during lessons and anytime your child is in or near the water**. You create a safe environment and set the example for your child on how to be safe in, on, and around the water. You will play with your child in the water and provide learning opportunities through songs and games.

Make sure your child is comfortable in an aquatic environment by being calm and showing a positive attitude toward the experience.

- Get engaged in activities to motivate your child to participate.
- Assist your child's development of movement skills in the water according to his or her ability.
- Reinforce safe behaviours taught by the Instructor.
- Practise active supervision by ensuring you are watching your child at all times when he or she is near or in the water.

The early levels of Red Cross Swim Preschool help you and your child adjust to the aquatic environment and feel secure in the water. Throughout the lessons, the Instructor will provide guidance, suggest activities, and encourage you to play with your child.

This program is very suitable for **babies** too. While babies are not ready to learn strokes and skills, they can enjoy the water, get comfortable with their early water experiences, and benefit from the physical exercise.





## How preschoolers learn

Different age groups have different characteristics. The Red Cross Swim Preschool program was designed around the **physical** and **social characteristics** and the **motor skills** of each age group.

To encourage learning in babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, the program uses **songs, games, and activities** that arouse children's curiosity, help them get comfortable in the water, and encourage them to participate. Play is an important tool for exploring and developing skills and is the perfect introduction to the water activities. Characteristics of different age groups:

<b>Babies</b> (4–12 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Make rhythmic movements to music</li> <li>■ Can play peek-a-boo</li> <li>■ Babble and coo to caregiver's voice or music</li> <li>■ Recognize caretaker's voice at a distance</li> </ul>
<b>Toddlers</b> (12–24 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Need time to explore and play with things</li> <li>■ Play alone and try to perform skills independently</li> <li>■ Obey simple commands</li> <li>■ Enjoy rhymes</li> </ul>
<b>Preschoolers</b> (2–6 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Are ready to become part of a group</li> <li>■ Want to make choices</li> <li>■ Show interest in imagery and games</li> <li>■ Can be independent of caregiver</li> </ul>



## Are swimming lessons safe for my preschooler?

Many caregivers wonder whether teaching babies, toddlers, or preschoolers to swim can cause medical problems. According to the American Paediatric Association (June 2010), **well-supervised swimming lessons are medically safe for children**. There is no evidence that infants participating in swim lessons are at greater risk of any medical conditions. The main concerns to be aware of when exposing your child to the aquatic environment include:

<b>Temperature control</b>	If your child is cold, remove him or her from the water and keep the child dry and warm. Have your child wear a lightweight T-shirt or neoprene swimsuit to class if he or she has difficulty staying warm during the lesson.
<b>Ear infections</b>	No special precautions are necessary, but children with active ear infections (as determined by a doctor) should not participate in class.
<b>Eye irritation</b>	No special precautions are necessary, but children who develop discharges or have excessively watery eyes should be taken to their doctor.
<b>Infectious diseases</b>	In most cases, children with colds should not participate in group activities in which they are in danger of infecting others.
<b>Respiratory limitations</b>	The lungs of small children are still developing and are unable to cope with long periods of physical exercise. After a short rest period, they can easily resume physical exercise.
<b>Water intoxication</b>	Rapidly swallowing large quantities of water can cause problems in very young children. Babies can swallow large amounts of water easily, especially if they are involuntarily submerged. Watch your child to ensure he or she is not "drinking" or swallowing excess water.



## Moving to the next program level

The Red Cross Swim Preschool program is designed to orient children to the water and help them feel secure in an aquatic environment. Each child learns at his or her own pace and should progress at a rate he or she is comfortable with. We encourage you to continuously play with your child in the water and in between classes and levels of the program.

As each level of our Preschool program has age guidelines based on the developmental characteristics of children, your child should be enrolled in levels at the appropriate age and when you feel he or she is ready. Between lesson sets, keep your child active in the water, whether at bath time, in a pool, or at the beach.



## Practise making waves at home!

How you can build on your child's swimming experience:

- Encourage your child to continue exploring the water during bath time and use the games and songs from class to reinforce skills.
- Work on rhythmic breathing/breath control: have your child close his or her mouth above and underwater and exhale through the mouth (blow bubbles) at the surface.
- Take your child to public or family swims to increase his or her comfort level and confidence in the water.

