



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# **SWIM TEAM HANDBOOK**

**County YMCA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook is designed for County Y Blue Dolphins Swim Team families as a reference for team philosophy, structure, policy, and helpful information. It is divided into sections and has an appendix for easy reference. The majority of the information in this handbook will be valid year after year. Current schedules, rosters, time standards, and other updates will be posted on the website and families will be notified by e-mail. While this handbook contains a large amount of information, there will inevitably be questions not answered within its pages. Those questions and policies are answered and developed at the discretion of the coaching staff and Executive Director. Issues outside the scope of this handbook will be resolved at the discretion of the YMCA. Please contact one of the coaches or the Executive Director immediately if you have a question concerning the swim team program.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **WELCOME**

Welcome to the County Y Blue Dolphins Swim Team. The goal of the swim team, like all Y programs, is to promote youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Competitive swimming is the vehicle through which participants learn life lessons that will impact them forever.

Some of these include:

- Grow personally through the building of self-esteem and self-reliance.
- Clarify values and to develop moral and ethical behaviors based on the Y's founding principles.
- Improve personal and family relationships by learning to care, communicate and cooperate with family and friends.
- Appreciate diversity and to respect people of different ages, abilities, incomes, races, religions, cultures and beliefs.
- Become better leaders and supporters through the give-and-take experiences of working toward a common good.
- Develop specific skills and to acquire new knowledge and ways to grow in spirit, mind and body.
- And most importantly, Have Fun and enjoy life!

We focus on the values that will enable each participant to build strong character and we take pride in the leaders and role models who graduate from the program. Throughout the program, you will find constant examples of these traits in action from our coaches, swimmers and parents.

The mission of the YMCA of Greater Erie is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all. The Y's involvement in sports has been one means of teaching Christian ideals, values and behaviors. Sports in the Y have never been an end in itself, but rather a vehicle for achieving a much more global purpose: values education. Values education is an integral part of the National YMCA Program. The values of fair play are strongly emphasized along with respect for oneself, for the opponent, and for the official game rules. All of these fair-play values contribute to an attitude towards sports which keeps winning in perspective, that is, only one goal among other important goals. We believe that children can benefit greatly from participation in competitive swimming. In swimming they learn to practice healthy lifestyles...spiritually, mentally and physically.

While there will be some experiences that are tougher than others, the coaches and parents comprise an important team in teaching the valuable lessons of a young person's life. We are excited that you are a part of our Y program and look forward to your family's involvement throughout the year.

# **EVERYONE SWIMS, EVERYONE WINS!**

## **ABOUT THE YMCA MOVEMENT**

The YMCA of the USA is a national organization, founded in 1851 (the YMCA movement began in London in 1844 and quickly spread to North America), which has evolved to promote the modern mission to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. As “America’s Oldest Swimming Instructor”, the Y has long valued the importance of fitness activities in the development of young people. All Y programs, including competitive swimming, incorporate values education and character development through the promotion of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

Today, the Y engages more than 10,000 neighborhoods across the U.S. As the nation’s leading nonprofit committed to helping people and communities to learn, grow and thrive, our contributions are both far-reaching and intimate—from influencing our nation’s culture during times of profound social change to the individual support we provide an adult learning to read.

## **ABOUT THE YMCA OF GREATER ERIE**

The YMCA of Greater Erie celebrates 153 years of service, not just to the Erie community but with an outreach and influence throughout the region of Northwest Pennsylvania.

The YMCA of Greater Erie is a non-profit organization whose cause is to strengthen community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Our cause is guided by our mission to: put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Serving over 45,000 people annually, the YMCA of Greater Erie includes 5 membership branches, 21 early care and school-age enrichment program centers and YMCA Camp Sherwin, an outdoor camping and recreation facility. We extend our reach through collaborative partnerships with the City of Erie to administer their summer recreation program and the Erie Housing Authority offering afterschool and summer educational and recreational programs. We reach thousands of youth through these programs and further address community need by the Summer Foods Program, offering free meals to children during the summer months.

Numerous community programs include Happy Feet, a movement class for differently-abled people; Adaptive Swimming Lessons, a program for those in the autism spectrum; ACT, an exercise based cancer recovery program; and Healthy Kids Day, a day geared towards healthy living. We also proudly support the community through an active volunteer program and collections of items for donation to area schools and nonprofits.

Combined with reduced fees for childcare, the Y provided over \$856,000 in program and membership assistance.

The County YMCA is a branch of the YMCA of Greater Erie.

## **TEAM STRUCTURE**

The County Y Swim Team is set up in levels based on achievement, attitude and commitment. This enables swimmers to progress at their individual rate while building bonds with team members in all age ranges. Placement into swimming levels is based primarily on the ability of swimmers. Each swimmer's age is determined as of Dec. 1. If the swimmer turns 9 on Dec. 2, they would continue to swim in the 8 & under group the entire Y season. The practice groups are as follows:

- a. **Novice** - Generally 8 & under
- b. **Developmental** - new 13 & under swimmers
- c. **Age Group** - Experienced 9 -13 Developing swimmers
- d. **Senior** - 12 & older upper level experienced swimmers

### **Novice**

Minimum Expectation: Complete 25 yards (1 length of pool) freestyle without stopping or assistance and have beginning knowledge of the other competitive strokes.

This is the introductory level of competitive swimming for swimmers 8 & under. This group teaches the basics of competitive swimming in the Y while having fun. This group builds upon the skills learned in Y swim lessons and improves all four competitive strokes.

### **Developmental**

Minimum Expectation: Complete 50 yards of freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke. Learning butterfly while developing turns, starts and competitive abilities.

### **Age Group**

Minimum Expectations: Complete 50 yards of both freestyle and backstroke and at least 25 yards butterfly and breaststroke. Swimmers develop the four competitive strokes, starts and turns in preparation for team meets. Also there is an introduction to training and conditioning.

### **Senior – 12 & over**

Minimum Expectations: Complete 500 yards freestyle, 200 yards individual medley and repeat 100s of each stroke. Swimmers focus on stroke technique, advanced conditioning and training habits. Swimmers are encouraged to explore greater competitive events and challenges. Senior Group is for swimmers who wish to make a stronger commitment to the team and to competitive swimming. Attendance, attitude, team support and work ethic expectations are elevated. Swimmers aspiring to excel in the highest levels of swimming will benefit from the foundations developed at this level. Dryland training and structured goal setting is introduced. Teamwork, volunteerism and a positive attitude are essential. Swimmers compete in a full slate of competitive events and place a greater emphasis on team development.

## SEASONS

The County Blue Dolphin Swim Team is affiliated with the Pennsylvania YMCA Northwestern Section of the Western Districts. The team competes in dual meets with teams from the YMCA's in Titusville, Oil City, North East, Corry, Franklin, Warren, Jamestown, Bradford and Meadville. Our team does travel to all these areas on Saturdays.

The league meet season, generally runs from early October through early February, and concludes with our league "championship meet" for the full team. This meet is **MANDATORY** for all County YMCA swimmers where each swimmer has the opportunity to swim in at least 2 individual events plus a relay (if a member of relay team). In order to qualify for this event, swimmers **MUST** represent their YMCA in a minimum of 5 separate league meets. If a League swimmer is a member of their HS Varsity swim team, they only have to represent their YMCA in three separate league dual meets to be eligible.

Swimmers who achieve a District meet-qualifying time may continue to practice and prepare for the PA Western District Swim meet, held in mid-March.

The six (6) fastest swimmers from each District, for each event, shall be eligible for the similar event in the PA YMCA State Championship Meet, held at Penn State University.

Swimmers who achieve a National meet qualifying time may continue to practice and prepare for the National Swim Meet, held at the beginning of April. This meet is usually held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

In order for a swimmer to attend the National meet, the swim team must have funds available to pay for his/her trip.

**Our summer** program is affiliated with local teams in Erie County. The team competes with Girard, Lakeshore and Kahkwa Country Clubs, McDowell, North East, Erie, Fairview and Harborcreek. Our team does travel during the week during this season.

*Summer League*- Generally runs from early June to late July, and concludes with our league "championship meet" for the full team. The meet is divided into two (2) days and takes place the last week in July. The two (2) days are split up by the swimmers ages. This meet is **MANDATORY** for all County YMCA swimmers. There are no other meets following this championship meet, swimmers do not advance to districts, states or nationals.

## PRACTICES

Practice is offered 4 nights a week for all age groups. Practice is held at the Edinboro University McComb field house. Practices will start at 6:00pm and last until 7:00pm. Some practices will be extended either in the water or on dry land. Please bring your swimmer early to practice and be there early to pick them up.

**\*\*Attendance at a minimum of two practices per week is mandatory\*\***

**Summer League**- Practice is offered 4 nights a week for all age groups. Practice is held at the Edinboro University McComb field house. Practice will be in the evenings (usually) for the first 2 weeks of practice (schedule will be provided). Afterwards, practice will be in the mornings. Practice will last an hour. Please check with the coaches or our website for practice times.

We do have practice the days of our swim meets. Unless, they are scheduled at the same time. All practices the day of a swim meet are **mandatory**. At this time, the line-

up will be reviewed.

All swimmers MUST attend a minimum of 3 practices per week. The more they attend the more improved they become!!! Thursday's practice is mandatory for all swimmers. High school swimmers must check in with the coach if a high school meet is scheduled for that evening.

All swimmers must enter and exit from the locker rooms located in the basement of McComb field house. They will not be able to enter from the pool doors.

**Practice cancellations-** ONLY if General McLane School District Cancels school or has an early dismissal due to WEATHER CONDITIONS. Days when school is not in session, practice takes place. Keep in mind - weather conditions in one location may not be the same elsewhere in the area. If there is a question, call ahead. If parents are experiencing hazardous conditions (snow, ice, thunderstorm) while their children are at practice, please come to the pool in case practice is ended early. Be on the safe side. Use your best judgment.

Schedule is subject to change due to times of high school meets, holidays, and the university schedule. Please see the website for updates and check with coaches for more details.

**Summer Cancellations-** You will be notified by our phone tree or during practice. Please check with the parent committee to make sure they have your current address, phone number and e-mail address.

## **PUNCTUALITY AND PRACTICE TIMES**

Please be on time to all practices. Practices begin with a warm up period to prevent injury. Instructions and important information are also given to swimmers at the beginning of practice.

Ideally, swimmers arrive up to 15 minutes prior to practice and wait on the pool deck for the beginning of practice. Swimmers are picked up within 15 minutes of the end of practice. This is particularly important at Edinboro, where coaches wait in the lobby of the building until all swimmers are picked up. Older swimmers must learn to balance their academic and swimming requirements. This is an important life skill they develop through participation in the program. Sometimes academic tasks become particularly demanding and swimmers feel unusual stress to stretch the balance between school and swimming. In this case work with the group coach so that they may help the swimmer to meet the academic requirement. Coaches will facilitate getting out of practice early to study or complete homework.

So that your child is fully engaged in practice and skill development, practices are CLOSED to parents. Parents may view the last ten minutes on Thursday evening's practice.

\*YMCA of Greater Erie swimming policy prohibits staff members from transporting program participants in their personal vehicles. Please do not ask County Y coaches to transport your child to or from practices, meets or team activities.

## **SCHEDULE**

Some updates and revisions may be necessary, especially during holidays. These are posted on the Y website and sent to team e-mail addresses.

## **FACILITIES**

The County Y Swim Team uses the Edinboro University pool. Please be aware that we are guests at each pool and treat that pool as someone else's home.

## **PRACTICE EQUIPMENT**

It is important to bring a suit, cap, goggles & towel to practice. The older swimmers may want to bring a water bottle also. It is a good idea to carry an extra cap, suit, and pair of goggles - "just in case." Coaches do not carry extra items to loan swimmers for practice and the facilities do not have extras to loan. **CLEARLY LABEL ALL ITEMS THAT ARE TAKEN TO PRACTICE.**

## **WHAT TO BRING TO MEETS**

Team suit – team cap – Goggles – at least 2 towels – team shirt – sweats – warm-up – parka pen & paper (to write down times and events) – shoes & socks – money (for heat sheet, healthy snacks) – healthy snacks (if facility permits)

**\*\* CLEARLY LABEL ALL ITEMS THAT ARE TAKEN TO A MEET\*\***

Deck space is often limited at meets so swimmers should pack accordingly and keep their belongings in their bags at all times.

**\*\*Electronics are not permitted on the pool deck\*\***

## **AGE GROUP DISTINCTIONS**

Swimmers compete according to their ages. Those age groups include: 8 & Under, 9/10, 11/12, 13/14, 15/16, 17/18. Some meets combine age groups, such as 10 & Under, 15-18, Senior (13 & Over) or Open (any age). For most YMCA meets in our region, including dual meets; their age group is determined by their age as of Dec. 1 of the current year for short course meets.

## **PUNCTIONALITY**

Please arrive at the meet location and check in with coaches on deck at least 15 minutes before the designated warm-up time. This will permit swimmers to fully stretch and warm up before competing and enable coaches to make relay decisions before the start of competition. Directions will be included in the meet information and addresses for dual meets are on the year's meet schedule.

## **TEAM AREA**

Swimmers should sit in the designated team area. This promotes team support and unity, which in turn contributes to swimming success and fun. Depending on the facility, there may or may not be a separate spectator area for family members. When there is such an area, parents who are not volunteering sit in the stands. Younger swimmers may choose to sit with their parents if the child prefers but they are encouraged to sit with the team.

## **BEHAVIOR**

Swim meets are an opportunity to display not only athletic ability but also team pride and sportsmanship. Parents and swimmers alike represent the County Y swim team and the YMCA of Greater Erie association. Swimmers are encouraged to cheer for their teammates and to stay until the end of the meet, meet session or until the last County Y swimmer competes. If a swimmer must leave before the end of a meet, please notify one of the coaches **before** the start of the meet.

## **CHECKING WITH COACHES**

Swimmers talk to their coaches before and after each swim. This is an important opportunity for coaches to give final reminders and encouragement before the event, and to offer praise and constructive review afterward. The role of parents at a swim meet is to love and support their children and to set a positive example by volunteering.

## **RESULTS AND AWARDS**

Results are posted on a wall at each meet. Parents and swimmers may copy official times and places from these results. The kind of awards (medals, ribbons, plaques) and the number of awards given at each meet are determined by the host team, or by league by-laws. Team trophies are given primarily at championship meets. All awards are given to coaches at the end of the meet and are distributed at practice. Coaches also receive the official results from the meet. These will be uploaded into the team database.

## **SNACKS**

Healthy snacks and beverages (water, sports drinks) are good for swimmers to have during meets, especially during long sessions (see nutrition section for tips). Some facilities do not allow food or drink on deck so please be attentive to policies at the various pools. Swimmers show respect to the facility by picking up all trash in the team area before leaving the meet.

## **TEAM APPAREL**

Swimmers wear County Y Swim Team attire, especially the team suit, cap and t-shirt, at all meets. Wearing team apparel promotes team pride and unity. It also helps coaches, parents and other swimmers locate County Y team members. The team suit will be designated by the YMCA based on performance and economics. All swimmers wear the team suit at all meets. All swimmers are required to wear the team cap at all meets that they swim for the County YMCA team.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

Swim meets are completely run by parent volunteers. There are numerous jobs to be filled at meets and volunteering is a great way to stay busy between your child's events. It also gets parents involved in the achievements of all team members and builds relationships with other parents in the swimming community. By sharing volunteer duties at both home and away meets, County Y parents contribute to a community of responsibility and support and they set a positive example for swimmers.

### All meets require:

- **Timers** - Time each heat in a specific lane using stopwatches that are provided by the host team. This job is very easy and keeps you right next to the action. No prior experience is necessary.

- Lane Assignment Coordinator – Volunteers are needed to ensure that swimmers are getting to assigned lanes at least two events prior to their scheduled event.
- Officials - These include the starter, referee, and stroke and turn judges. They conduct the meet and address rule infractions; training is necessary (through USA Swimming and/or YMCA, depending on the meet). There is always a demand for these volunteers. Training is technical but not lengthy or difficult.

## **Parent Committees**

### **Team Communication/PR Committee**

- Promotes swimmer achievements and activities through newspaper & other media coverage
- Assists with development, preparation and distribution of newsletters.
- Assists with development, preparation and maintenance of the team web site.
- Assists in maintaining swim team promotional and recognition space located at the County YMCA.
- Maintains team records as well as current times book

### **Fundraising**

Promotes/Organizes events and activities

### **Social**

Plans family and team activities

Chaperones/banquet/birthday cards to swimmers/gifts/ family outreach

### **Swim Store**

One parent will volunteer to carry our 'swim store" to all meets.

At least one parent from each family is asked to volunteer and serve on one committee.

## **FINANCIAL/PROGRAM FEES**

There are many costs involved in operating the swim team. Much, but not all of the cost is covered by program fees. Below is a list of what is and is not covered by your program fees.

### **Covered:**

*Coaches' salaries*

*Pool rental fees*

*General operating costs*

*Dual meet costs*

*YMCA Championships*

### **Not Covered:**

*Meet fees travel costs*

*Suit, goggles, cap, training equipment*

*Team clothing, special events or parties*

*Swim bag, team travel expenses,*

*West Districts, YMCA States and*

*YMCA National meet costs*

### Payment in Full

At the time of registration a family pays a fee per child and **must be a member in good standing of the YMCA of Greater Erie**

### Swim Meet Fees (Districts, States, & Nationals)

*As explained in the Swim Meet section, all meet fees are paid by check, cash, or credit card at the County YMCA front desk.*

### Financial Assistance

To apply, contact the aquatic director or the membership director. Inquiries, the application process, and awards of assistance are kept confidential.

## **FUNDRAISING**

The County Y Swim Team does require families to participate in fundraising and/or volunteer activities. Fundraising and volunteering is necessary for the program for specific purposes. Fundraising helps to pay for coach's travel, facility equipment, end of the year Awards Banquet, swimmer's gifts, etc.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Regular communication is essential for coaches, swimmers and parents and several means of communication are used. Please check each of these sources regularly and promptly contact the Head Swim Coach or Executive Director if you have questions, concerns or information to share.

## **INFORMATION FOR SWIMMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES:**

E-Mail – Information, reminders and last-minute information is sent to families via e-mail from the Head Coach. This is the primary means of communication. Please update your information with an email to the Head Coach when necessary.

Texting – Group texting will be used for reminders, cancellations, etc.

Facebook page -Team news, notes and a monthly calendar from the swim team Coaches will report on upcoming events, deadlines, changes, etc. Postings are to go through coaching staff. These will be posted on the site whenever appropriate.

County Y web site – The Blue Dolphins website is an information reference site. Please check the site often for updates. If you have digital pictures to submit for the site, send them to the Head Coach. <http://www.ymcaerie.org/county/swim-team/>.

Verbal - Sometimes swimmers are given information verbally by coaches. Regularly ask your swimmer about information given verbally.

Parent meetings - Held regularly throughout the year, these meetings allow coaches to convey information directly to parents regarding the team, the season and the sport. They also provide an open forum for parents to ask questions and address concerns.

## **COMMUNICATING WITH COACHES:**

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CALL COACHES AT HOME. Please respect their personal and family time by addressing issues before and after practice.

email - Parents are welcome to e-mail coaches with questions, information and ideas. Please address large issues or concerns in person with the appropriate staff member(s). Each coach may be reached by e-mail through the team email address. Individual coaches are not required, but may provide their cell phone numbers at their own discretion. Please use those respectfully and judiciously.

Meeting (formal or informal) with coaches - Coaches are usually available before or after practice time to answer quick questions. If you would like to address issues that require more time, please schedule an appointment with your child's coach or the Head Coach.

### Electronic Communication Policy

YMCA of Greater Erie coaches and volunteers are not permitted to contact program participants by phone or electronically for any purpose other than transmitting program-specific information. Employees may not participate in social network communication with program participants. Please do not solicit such social or casual communication with County Y coaching staff members.

## **GRIEVANCES**

Most problems are rooted in simple misunderstandings or miscommunication and can be resolved quickly and easily. If allowed to fester, however, problems grow out of proportion and can be harmful to swimmers, parents, coaches, and the program. This can be prevented by addressing grievances immediately and with the appropriate person.

Contact: Practice Level Coach

When: An issue is group-specific, site-specific or swimmer-specific or when there is a question or concern for a specific coach.

Contact: Head Coach or Executive Director

When: An issue concerns the overall swim team, financial or administrative concerns.

## **SWIMMER, PARENT, AND COACH**

The relationship between swimmer, coach and parent is an important aspect of swimming. In order to support the swimmer's development, it is important to maintain a mutually supportive partnership with regular communication. Swimmers, parents and coaches may not always agree but respectful and open communication will help maintain a positive relationship. The collective goal of the swimmer-coach-parent triangle is the maintenance of an environment most conducive to the development of the swimmer - both as an athlete and as a person.

## **The Role of the SWIM TEAM PARENT**

To support and encourage your swimmer to achieve their personal best.

To help your swimmer(s) be on time, have proper nutrition, encouragement to be competitive and maintain a positive attitude.

To respect the coach's decisions and practice times. The coach will be available before and after practices to answer any questions.

To participate in the parent group and fundraiser events.

Fundraising- each child/family is asked to participate to help raise money for our swim team. These monies help us to buy new equipment, cover swim meet dues, end of season banquet and awards. If a family cannot participate in the swim team fundraising events a flat donation is acceptable.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

As representatives of the County Y Swim Team and the County YMCA, swimmers are expected to speak and behave in a manner that is respectful, responsible, honest, and caring. These guidelines are to be followed by County Y swimmers at all practices, meets, and other team functions as well as in electronic communications. Special activities, such as team travel trips, require adherence to additional activity-specific conduct guidelines.

The following behaviors are not acceptable and may result in suspension from the team:

- Unsportsmanlike conduct - taunting, teasing, or speaking negatively about teammates, competitors, officials, or coaches.
- Use of inappropriate, strong, or vulgar language or gestures.
- Lying, deceit, dishonesty.
- Littering, abuse, or misuse of equipment, furniture, or other items of property.

The first violation will receive a verbal warning. The second will result in dismissal from the practice, meet, or team function where the violation was made. The third violation will result in suspension from the team for a period of time determined by the Head Coach. A fourth violation will cause the removal of the swimmer from the program as determined by the Executive Director. Parents will be notified at each step.

The following actions will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the team:

- Verbal or physical abuse toward others.
- Theft of any kind.
- Vandalism or any destruction of property, public or private.
- Use of tobacco products or other illegal substances.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages or other illegal substances.
- Sexual activity

## **DRESS CODE**

Swimmers are expected to dress with dignity and appropriate taste whenever representing the team. This includes going into and out of practices, meets and team activities.

Swimmers should not show any part of their undergarments (boxer shorts, bra straps, etc.) outside of their clothes. Rude or suggestive pictures or writing are not acceptable. Skirts and shorts must be of an appropriate length. Pants, shorts and skirts should not hang at the waist lower than the hip bones. Swimmers should routinely monitor the condition of their suits so that they are not worn by themselves when they no longer provide adequate coverage and support.

## **HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

Swimming is an ideal sport to promote total health and fitness. Here is some basic information on health and nutrition to prevent injury and to help ensure improved performance in practice and meets.

### **HEALTH**

All pools have safety rules posted. Please read and follow them. These standard pool safety rules always apply:

1. Don't run.
2. Never swim alone.
3. Look before you dive.
4. Never bring glass containers on a pool deck.
5. No horseplay on pool deck or in locker rooms.

Some other safety guidelines pertaining to swim practices and meets:

1. Inform coaches of medical conditions and prescription drugs.
2. Swimmers with asthma should always bring an inhaler and have it ready for use.
3. Swimmers should always bring and use a water bottle for practice and meets.
4. Wear proper shoes and clothing for outdoor activities.

Swim coaches are required to be trained in First Aid, CPR, and either Lifeguarding or Safety Training for Swim Coaches.

### **INJURIES**

Injuries incurred during practice, meets, or team activities will be treated immediately and parents will be notified. Sometimes swimmers experience pain that is not the result of a particular wound or accident. Muscle pain is common, especially as swimmers mature and their muscles develop further. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between soreness and injury. If pain restricts movement or lasts more than 3-4 days, swimmers should seek medical attention. Coaches are not doctors and can only give advice, not diagnosis or treatment. It is, however, important to keep coaches informed of injuries, treatments, and rehabilitation.

### **ILLNESS**

In case of illness, swimmers should let their bodies heal by restricting activity. It is also better to miss a practice or two than to expose many other team members and coaches to the same illness. Once recovered, swimmers can return to practice and work to regain their strength in the water.

### **SWIMMER'S EAR**

Otitis Externa, commonly known as "swimmer's ear," is an infection of the skin in the ear canal. The dark, warm, wet environment of a swimmer's ear canal is a breeding ground for such an infection. To prevent swimmer's ear, dry the ear well after each time in the water. Use a towel, Q-tip (carefully), or gently shake the head on its side. Commercial products aid in the prevention and treatment of swimmer's ear. A cheap and easy remedy is to make a solution of 50% rubbing alcohol and 50% white vinegar. A couple of drops in each ear will help kill some of the normal bacteria and will help dry out the ear. \*\* Alcohol or vinegar should not be put in the ears of children with PE tubes in their ears or holes in their eardrums. (Information borrowed from Dr. Raymond B. Coors, MD.)

## **NUTRITION**

Food is the body's fuel, and the body's performance can be helped or hindered by the quality of food that is consumed. In terms of quantity, young swimmers must strike a delicate balance between consuming enough calories and nutrients to promote growth and skeleton-muscular development on the one hand, and not eating so much that they are sluggish due to excess food storage. As for quality of food, carbohydrates should make up the highest percentage of a swimmer's diet. Carbohydrates provide the greatest source of energy during physical exertion.

Swimmers may need a boost of "fuel" before and after practice, so eating smaller meals plus snacks during the day can be helpful in sustaining a swimmer's energy. Furthermore, the body more quickly and efficiently digests smaller amounts eaten throughout the day than it does large meals eaten three times a day. This is particularly important during meets that can last several hours per session. Snacks at meets should be small, easily digestible, and able to be quickly converted to energy (foods high in carbohydrates and low in fat). Try to leave at least 20-30 minutes between the time you eat a snack and the time you swim your next event.