

Major new study on health benefits of swimming released

SWIM ENGLAND MEDIA RELEASE

- Swimming is uniquely placed to support people throughout their entire life.
- Swimming lowers the risk of early death by 28 per cent.
- Swimming lessons help children to develop skills quicker.
- Swimming and aquatic activity is a safe, cost effective and viable option for healthcare professionals to signpost patients.
- Call for more research on the impact of physical activity on mental health and long term conditions.

A new study that evidences the health and wellbeing benefits of swimming has been released today by Swim England. The report shows that the unique benefits of water make it the perfect place for people of all ages to exercise, particularly those with long term health conditions. The report also found evidence that swimmers live longer and regular swimming helps older people stay mentally and physically fit. Importantly, it also showed that participation in swimming lessons can help children to develop physical, cognitive and social skills quicker than those who do not have lessons.

Swim England commissioned the independent report and will use the findings to raise awareness within the health profession that swimming is a safe, cost effective and viable option to signpost patients.

The national governing body for swimming in England is also calling on the wider health and sports sector to come together and invest in further research on the impact of physical activity on mental health and long term conditions.

Jane Nickerson, Swim England CEO, said: “It is evident from the report that swimming has enormous potential to support the health and wellbeing of the nation. The unique properties of water means that unlike other activities, no one is restricted from taking part.

“The report particularly highlights the benefits of swimming and aquatic activities for people with mental health concerns or problems with their joints and muscles. This supports findings from our Dementia Friendly Swimming project, but is an area where further research across the health and sports sector is required. “We will use the report findings to continue to develop our Health and Wellbeing Model and our Aquatic Activity for Health qualification. We will also be working closely with the swimming workforce and health practitioners to increase awareness of the benefits of swimming and make it a viable option for signposting patients.”

Mike Farrar, Swim England Group Board Chairman and former CEO of the NHS Confederation, said: “For too long, national guidelines have concentrated on the cardio vascular benefits of exercise undertaken by healthy people, rather than on those who are less fit or have long term health conditions. “To fully understand the links between physical activity and health in the general population, we would need to see more national resources invested into research. This report shows that activities like swimming really do have the potential to be a game-changer in supporting the health of this nation, especially at a time when cuts to services means less money for long-term care.”

The reports remit was developed by the Swimming and Health Commission under the Chairmanship of Professor Ian Cumming.

The Health Education England Chief Executive, said: “The Swimming and Health Commission was established by Swim England to explore the evidence base for the health benefits of swimming. The resulting academic report is a ground-breaking collection of papers that identify striking and robust evidence for the significant improvements in health and quality of life that swimming produces.

“Swim England is the first sport governing body to support such an in-depth investigation of its relationship with health and wellbeing and I would like to applaud them for their foresight and for producing a piece of work that I am sure will become a reference document for many years to come.”

The full Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Swimming report and Swim England’s response can be accessed via: [j.mp/HealthCommissionReport](https://www.swimengland.org.uk/HealthCommissionReport)

The Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Swimming report was commissioned by the Swimming and Health Commission on behalf of Swim England to explore the impact of swimming on physical, mental and social wellbeing. It has been written by a range of eminent academics and is supported by the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies.