

## POSITION STATEMENT

# INFANT SWIM LESSONS

Infant swim programs are not a substitute for adequate supervision. Caregivers should avoid swimming programs that claim to “drown-proof” infants. Participants of infant swimming lessons are not immune to drowning. Caregivers should look for “Learn to Swim” programs which focus on building water confidence and teaching caregivers about water safety. Infants and toddlers require continuous, active, and within arm’s reach supervision by a caregiver when in, on, and around water.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Drowning can happen regardless of how comfortable a person is in the water. No one can be truly “drown-proofed”. Children under 4 years of age are at the highest risk of drowning when there is not adequate caregiver supervision.

There are some organizations that claim they can “drown-proof” infants by teaching them how to swim. The Society has been approached by affiliates, members, and the public with questions about swim programs claiming to “drown-proof” infants.

Swimming lessons should be taught by certified instructors in a pool or waterfront that conforms to local regulations and standards for design, maintenance, operation, and safety supervision.

Swimming lessons provide one layer of protection in reducing water related injury and drowning. The Lifesaving Society recommends several layers of protection to keep a child safe in an aquatic environment.

These include:

- Caregiver Active Supervision
- Training for Caregivers
- Wearing Lifejackets
- Learning to Swim
- Installing Barriers to Private Pools

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## **RATIONALE:**

In Canada drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children 0 - 4 with an average of 21 drowning deaths per year. The Lifesaving Society, a leader in drowning prevention, has found no research demonstrating swimming lessons for children under the age of 4 will prevent drowning. Infant swimming lessons should not be promoted as an effective drowning prevention strategy. Swim lessons do not replace continuous, active, and within arm's reach supervision by a caregiver.

Although it may be possible to teach children under the age of 4 basic motor skills, they do not have the developmental ability to use aquatic survival skills to "self-rescue" in an emergency situation, to protect them from drowning.

## **DEFINITIONS:**

Infant: a child less than 1 year of age

Toddler: a child between 1 and 3 years of age

Caregiver: an individual, who is a minimum of 13 years of age or older, that provides direct care and active supervision for a child or children in an aquatic environment

## **REFERENCES:**

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