

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

Swimming

Swimming is a wonderful way to exercise that's easy on the joints and muscles. But what if you've never swum a lap before or the last time you popped on the flippers was decades ago?

BY JESSICA ABELSOHN

I imagine this. You're in a beautiful pool, gliding down the lane, light as a feather, and you're finally able to be at one with your thoughts. Plus, you're getting fitter and fitter with each stroke. Anyone can become a swimmer; it's all about being water safe, understanding the correct techniques and seeking help if you need it.

But I don't know how to swim at all

Don't let this stop you. There are plenty of adult swimming classes just waiting for you to attend.

There are also plenty of older Australians who simply were never given the opportunity to learn how to swim in their childhood. In a country like Australia though, where water surrounds us and inland water bodies are in abundance, it's imperative that people are water safe, no matter what age.

Just search online for your closest swim school or ask people in your local community. There's bound to be one near by.

I used to swim, but that was a long time ago

Again, don't let this stop you. If you feel your confidence is lacking, take it slowly. Start by slipping into the shallow end where you can stand comfortably and take your time to adjust. If you have access to a personal pool, perhaps start by swimming laps width-way along the shallow end, rather than heading to the deep end. Once you have your confidence back, you can start to venture out.



Swimming is a wonderful tool for your emotional and mental wellbeing.

It's all in the technique

While swimming laps is all fine and dandy, you're not going to get as much benefit out of it if you're not using the correct technique.

Plus, just because you're buoyant in the water doesn't mean you're immune to injury. You may be doing harm to your body if

you're twisting and turning the wrong way.

Sometimes, it's best to start with a refresher course. A swim school will help correct any inconsistencies and show you the right way to move your body so you get the most out of your swimming. At some pools, there are also lifeguards or swimming experts on hand if you need some assistance.

The benefits

They say that swimming is the perfect exercise to keep you calm and centred. By blocking out everything around you, often it's the best time to collect your thoughts, relax into the motions and let the stress seep out of you. Swimming is a wonderful tool for your emotional and mental wellbeing. And of course, it's also a great way to stay fit, while still being relatively easy on your body.

It can be the perfect way to stay active if you have injuries that prevent you from walking, running or other load-bearing exercises. Or, it can be the perfect complement to your other activities. ••