

Lifejackets

Many Starfish Swimming® programs promote the use of lifejackets and incorporate them into the curriculum. Lifejackets are a necessary component of any water activity and this handout will provide you with more information regarding their use in our program as well as guide you through activities that you can perform at home with your child.

Why use a lifejacket in swim lessons?

Lifejackets should be worn by all weak or non-swimmers when in, on, or near the water. Even those who think they are good swimmers should consider wearing a lifejacket when in, on, or near water that is deeper than their body height. Lifejackets or Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) are also required on boats and other personal water craft. Yet, one may not instinctively know how to put on a lifejacket or how to use it in the water. Therefore, lifejackets are a critical component of swim lessons.

The lifejacket is also an excellent teaching tool. Wearing a lifejacket enables swimmers to perform skills independently. Front floats, back floats, rolling over to breathe, and kicking are just some skills that can be practiced while wearing a lifejacket.

Lifejackets are used to accomplish the following Safety Skill Benchmarks in the Starfish Swimming® curriculum:

StarBabies™ Stage Red:

Fit and properly put a lifejacket on the child.

Starfish Swim School® Stage Red:

Put on a lifejacket, float on back, kick 20 feet.

Starfish Stroke School™ Stage Red:

Put on a lifejacket from in the water, kick 30 feet.

While the lifejacket serves as one layer of protection around the water, it is not a guarantee. Constant supervision by an adult is necessary to ensure a child's safety!



Here is a poem from the
"Can Starfish Make A Wish Book?"
to read with your child:

BRITTANY HAS A LIFEJACKET

Brittany has a lifejacket
It fits so nice and snug.
Everywhere that Brittany goes,
The lifejacket gives a hug.
Brittany went on a boat one day,
"Wear a lifejacket" was the rule.
Brittany was even able to float and play
Wearing a lifejacket in the pool.



How to Properly Fit a Lifejacket



Step #1: Inspect It!

Make sure the lifejacket or PFD is approved by the United States Coast Guard and is in good condition.

Step #2: Fit It!

Fit the lifejacket to your child's size. Child lifejacket approvals are based on the child's weight. They can be marked "less than 30", "30 to 50", "less than 50", or "50 to 90".

Step #3: Fasten It!

Fasten all straps and tighten for a snug fit.

Step #4: Tug it!

Pull the lifejacket up from the shoulders and make sure that the lifejacket does not pull up over the child's face.

Step #5: Wear it!

Make sure that if your child removes the lifejacket to take a break from the water, they follow all steps when putting the lifejacket back on and entering the water again.

In order to be effective, lifejackets must be worn correctly and fit snugly around the swimmer; an improperly sized or worn PFD is a hazard, not a safety tool.

More to Know

In general, PFDs can serve effectively as a water safety enhancement for weak or non-swimmers, especially children. Noted benefits of PFDs include maintaining a swimmer's head above water with the ability to breathe air. Using a PFD, a swimmer will exert far less energy and require much less strength while in the pool, resulting in less exhaustion and a corresponding reduction in water distress or drowning.

Many swimming facilities have policies regarding lifejacket use. Lifejackets may be required or recommended during the following activities:

- large swimming groups (field trips, birthday parties, recreational swim times)
- snorkeling and pool games
- activity pools, wave pools, and lazy rivers

Discuss with your child that regardless of their swimming ability, they may be required to wear a lifejacket during any of these activities. Wearing a lifejacket is fun and will keep them safe!



Starfish Safety Concepts:

- Children should always ask permission before going in, on, or near the water.
- Constant supervision by a designated "child watcher" adult is a must around water.
- Wearing a lifejacket is fun!
- Pool (or lake) water is for swimming, not drinking.
- Feet-first entry into shallow water (any water less than two times your height).
- If someone is in trouble in the water, reach out or throw something that floats.
- Learn to swim.
- Learn CPR and know how and when to call 911.