



The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a statement that there is little justification for swimming lessons for children under the age of 4. Their recommendation warns that children do not possess the coordination to learn how to swim under the age of 4 and that any swimming lesson program gives a false sense of security to parents about their child's swimming skills.

While we do validate their concerns for drownings of children and we do appreciate their efforts in raising awareness about this issue, we feel that this is not a balanced account. To this date, there have been no controlled studies to support this policy by the Academy. Their recommendation is unfounded and particularly of concern since we feel that there are benefits in participating in a high quality aquatics program. It is also unfortunate that the media has focused primarily on the general "headline" that children under 4 should not be in swimming lessons.

There is no question that a child of any age will ever be completely "drownproof" or "watersafe", however we can teach our children and their parents to be safer around the water. The four most important elements of water safety are

- Constant supervision around pools and open water
- Layers of protection, including pool fencing, self closing and latching gates, door alarms on doors leading to the pool, approved pool covers, etc
- Family members and caregivers should be skilled in CPR
- Swimming instruction in a high quality aquatics program

The best aquatics programs focus on three areas: swimming skills, safety behaviors for the child to use around the water, and education of parents on the learn to swim process and water safety strategies they should employ. Aquatic instruction is an ongoing process and should continue long term over the childhood to maximize the child learning proper swimming techniques and respect for the water.

Ocaquatics Swim School has been a member of the United States Swim School Association since 1994. The USSSA is a professional organization formed by swim school owners and teachers to enhance instruction and operation of aquatic facilities worldwide. This organization has had an infant/toddler swimming course for over 10 years that has been adapted in several countries. Our teachers who teach classes of our younger swimmers have gone through the USSSA's infant/toddler course and we follow their guidelines for teaching infants. All of our teachers are also certified in CPR and Water Safety Instruction by the American Red Cross. Our program involves the parent or primary caregiver in the water with our younger children during the learning process. Our school does ask prior to the first lesson about any medical condition that would affect participation in a swimming lesson program. We take protective measures to prevent fecal contamination.

How many families in Florida can keep their children from being exposed to pools or beaches until the age of four? It is a tragedy not to allow a child to have supervised access to this part of their environment. All children should participate in a high quality aquatics program before the age of 4 especially in a community that is surrounded by pools and open water. It is the responsibility of the parents and caregivers to supervise children around water.

We are proud of our commitment to improve awareness and water safety in the community!