

The following short articles are excerpted from 2007 and 2008 editions of the *Penguin Press*, a monthly newsletter printed for swimmers and parents of Los Paseos Aquatic Club, a community swim team for kids ages 5-18.

SWIM MEET SURVIVAL TIPS

“Lord, if I have only one day left to live, let it be at a swim meet, because those things last forever.”

Experienced swimmers and parents know how true that is. Here’s a few tips to make those long days more fun for everyone:

Dress in Layers. Even in the summer, it’s usually pretty chilly at 6:45 when swimmers check in. Your best bet is to dress in layers that can be shed as the day gets hotter.

Be Prepared. Swimmers should have 2 towels, sunscreen, a cap, goggles, sweats, and flip-flops.

Seek Shade. Lots of swim team families bring their own EZ-Up tents — but you must arrive early to stake out your territory.

Make Yourself Comfortable. Bring folding chairs and blankets to sit on. Many swimmers bring sleeping bags to curl up in after those chilly morning “warm-ups” and between events.

Bring Entertainment. Swim meets can last a long time, and even the most spirited fans can get tired of watching the races. Bring books, playing cards, video games, ipods, or travel board games to help kids pass the time.

Eat, Drink... Swimmers burn a lot of calories, and they need to replace some of that energy — so bring along healthy snacks that won’t melt in the sun. Make sure everyone (including parents) stays hydrated. And don’t forget to visit our snack bar and help support the team — you don’t want to miss the world-famous Los Paseos breakfast burritos and tri-tip sandwiches.

... and Be Merry! Finally, and most important of all, have FUN swimming, cheering, and hanging out with your friends...that’s the best way to make the day go by faster!

WHAT TO EXPECT THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF SWIM PRACTICE

Muscle Cramps

Swimming uses muscles that you probably haven't exercised in months, so it's normal to get some painful cramps, especially in the feet and calves. When you do get a cramp, get to the side of the pool and gently stretch and massage the muscle that hurts. To prevent them from happening, stretch before and during workouts, eat more bananas, and drink water or Gatorade regularly during practice.

Increased Appetite

Swimming burns a lot of calories, so don't be surprised if you suddenly develop a ravenous appetite. To keep your energy level up, you'll need to give your body plenty of fuel — primarily carbohydrates like pasta, bread, and cereal. Have a light snack before practices (such as a bagel, raisins, or a banana) and try to eat a carb and protein snack within 30 minutes after practice. Eat meals that are high in carbohydrates and protein to build your muscles. And don't forget to drink — water or sports drinks like Gatorade — before, during, and after practices!

Fatigue

Swimming is hard work, and you should expect to be tired after a good workout! You may need to get to bed a little earlier (or sleep in later in the morning) as your body adjusts to the increased exercise. Even if you feel tired, though, try to keep coming to practice every day — it's fun, and it's also the best way to improve your endurance and get yourself in shape for meets.