

Dear Parents/Carers,

I wanted to write to you regarding your child's School Swimming Lesson, when they return to school in September. I am sure you have questions and some of you maybe a little anxious about them returning.

The lockdown was incredibly disruptive for children and their physical activity – It is vitally important for their physical and mental wellbeing we get our children back into exercise.

Let's begin with the journey to the pool, our Transport provider will be deep cleaning all coaches at the beginning and the end of the working day. They have introduced hand sanitisers on their vehicles and occupants will be asked to sanitise on entry to the vehicle. As your child will be travelling in their class bubble there will be no need for them to wear a mask, however the driver of the vehicle will wear one. After the class has exited the coach the driver will sanitise all touch points before any further occupants can travel.

Swimming pools tend to be germ-free thanks to the chemicals used in the water.

The Pool Water Treatment and Advisory Group (PWTAG) has issued an updated statement after consulting with Public Health England about the subject following many queries about the safety of pool use during the outbreak.

"We have checked with our national leads who confirm that coronavirus would be inactivated at the levels of chlorine used in swimming pools.

"Public Health opinion is that it is generally safe to go swimming at this time. Water and the chlorine within swimming pools will help to kill the virus."

While that sounds reassuring, there are other health implications to consider when deciding whether to swim, including mixing with other pool-users. For reassurance our schools at Tameside Wellness Centre there will be no public sessions in the pool during lessons. To allow for cleaning periods between schools/sessions, each booking will be allocated either the group changing rooms or cubicle changing. This will alternate between school bookings to allow cleaning time of each area.

PWTAG goes on to explain that it is encouraging the management and owners of swimming pools to take hygiene and safety precautions to keep swimmers as safe as possible, including frequent testing of the pool water for pH and disinfectant levels, monthly bacterial tests of pool water, and compliance with guidance in the PWTAG Code of Practice.

Pool owners are also being asked to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the pool environment and making sure they are regularly cleansing areas used by the public.

The poolside is cleaned, and all touch points are sanitised after each school exits the pool. During lessons each swimmer will be allocated their own set of equipment and this too will be sanitised before it's next use.

Swimwear should be a one-piece costume for girls and swimming trunks for boys. Pools will allow swimmers to wear swimming shorts that are lined and not below mid-thigh in length that do not hamper swimming development. Unlined and Bermuda type fashion shorts are not appropriate for school swimming sessions.

Equally, children's religious and cultural needs will be taken into consideration during school swimming sessions. Pools are happy to accept tight leggings and tops worn over the top of swimming costumes as acceptable swimwear under these circumstances.

We recommend that goggles are not worn during school swimming lessons due to the high numbers of children and consequent potential for hazards. If goggles need to be worn, swimmers need to put them on and remove themselves as staff can't assist with this. If goggles become a problem during lessons the swimmer will be asked to remove them. Jewellery and watches are not permitted because of the danger of injury to the individual and others in the sometimes-busy environment of the pool. Earrings should be removed prior to the lesson, in exceptional circumstances i.e. Ears recently pierced studs maybe worn but must be covered by a swimming hat. Active Tameside does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage to jewellery brought to school swimming sessions.

Long hair can cause problems whilst in swimming lesson which can hinder a child's development within the lessons. As a minimum, long hair must be tied back but we would recommend that children with long hair wear a swimming hat. As with googles staff are unable to assist putting them on.

Active Tameside re opened our centres on 27th July and have taken a phased approach to introducing our services. We are putting the safety of our customers and staff at the forefront of every policy and procedure we implement. Feedback from customers using our facilities has been extremely positive and I want to reassure you we will continue to put the safety of your children as our number one priority.

If you have any further questions or worries please do not hesitate to contact me directly at nicola.lawton@activetameside.com.

Regards

Nicola Lawton
Swimming Development Manager