



Region 7 Review

A monthly publication for the members of IPSSA, Inc. – Region 7

July 2005

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Director's Corner

Water chem - The IPSSA B.O.R.D. is developing a training booklet.

A word to the wise... Summer is here - don't forget to wear sun screen and drink lots of water.

Old Wives' Tale -- swimming after eating

~ by Barbara Mikkelson

Childhood is fraught with dangers, both real and imagined. One of the greatest bogeymen needlessly inflicted upon countless youngsters is the unshakable belief that if they go swimming too soon after eating, they will be seized by cramps and drown. Unless that hour is waited out — all sixty minutes of it, and no cheating — they will surely sink like stones, leaving barely a ripple on the surface.

Caution is a good thing when it comes to youngsters and water, because drowning is a leading cause of accidental death for infants and children nationwide. Yet in this case, the caution was far from warranted.

No one knows how long the belief about the dangers of swimming after eating has been with us, but in 1961 exercise physiologist Arthur Steinhaus took a position against it in the *Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation*. He labeled the very idea of stomach cramps "questionable."

Although muscle cramps in the calves, feet, and hands while swimming are not unknown, they are certainly not life threatening provided the swimmer does not panic. The sharpest charley horse can be tamed by tensing and relaxing the afflicted muscle, a treatment any swimmer can manage to perform. Even if the cramp is left untreated, it will not cause the swimmer to slip beneath the waves. One can simply float until help arrives.

All of the above applies to ordinary muscle cramps of the sort brought on by overexertion, not the dread stomach cramps this admonition warns against. Many believe this fearsome condition does not exist, although those who tout the dangers of premature swimming will go into great detail when describing the presumed mechanics behind the threat: *[Engel & Malloy, 1993]*

What's not in doubt, however, are the lack of deaths associated with swimming right after eating — there hasn't been so much as one drowning attributed to this, not even a near drowning. For something that was supposed to be fatal if you so much as dipped a toe, this particular old wives' tale proved to be a dud.

So what to do with this information? Those who are very careful about not taking any risks that are avoidable might want to put off striking out for the other side of the lake right after having tucked into a large meal. However, ordinary levels of swimming or just general horsing around in the water need not be eschewed, even if a whole turkey has just been consumed, feathers and all. Likewise, strenuous sidestroke can still be safely undertaken after a snack or a light to moderate-sized meal.

As for those kids who will continue to be sidelined for an hour after eating (deeply internalized cautions

are very hard to dislodge, especially those inculcated into the legions of moms and dads already convinced everything their youngsters get up to will end in disaster), they can at least take comfort in the knowledge that they're not being raised in Cuba where the parental belief runs to *three hours*.

As excerpted from www.snopes.com, an urban legend reference site.

<http://www.snopes.com/oldwives/houwait.asp>

Last updated: 3 January 2005

Calendar of Events

- **R7 Board Meeting**, Tues., July 26, 7:00 p.m., Filippi's Pizza Grotto (858) 748-1800, 13000 Oak Knoll Dr., Poway, off Hwy 15 and Poway Rd.
- **BORD Mtg.**, Sat., Aug. 6, Waterfront Plaza Hotel, Oakland, CA. Contact IPSSA executive office, (888) 360-9505, or ipssamail@aol.com.
- **R7 Picnic**, Sun., Aug. 28, De Anza Cove, Mission Bay. Hawaiian theme. **Don't miss it** – tickets for a Hawaiian vacation for two will be given away!
- **World Aquatic Health Conference**, Mon., Sept. 19 – Wed., Sept. 21, Pacific Palms Conference Resort, City of Industry, CA. Contact www.nspf.org.
- **Pool Industry Expo**, Thurs., Sept. 29 – Sat., Oct. 1, Monterey Conference Center, Monterey, CA. www.poolindustryexpo.com
- **Spa & Pool Industries Memorial Golf Tournament in Honor of Jock Hamilton**, Sat., Oct. 22, Hollister, CA. Contact Ivan Vance, 818-376-8541.

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