

# Lap It Up

A DAILY DIP IN THE DEEP END COULD ADD YEARS TO YOUR LIFE

**• Fitness** AS IF YOU needed another excuse to hit the pool this summer, new research shows that swimmers live longer than walkers and runners. And not just a little bit longer, either. In a study of more than 40,000 men ages 20 to 90 who were followed for 32 years, swimmers were 50 percent less likely to die during the study period than were walkers or runners.

The results were so unexpected that the lead researcher, Steven Blair, a professor of exercise science at the University of South Carolina, is hesitant to draw any broad conclusions. "I was expecting to see swimmers and runners have a lower risk of dying," he says. "I was a little surprised that the swimmers had a statistically significant lower death rate than the runners, but they did."

## Learn to Swim

Find adult swim classes through your city's recreation and parks department or the American Red Cross (<https://americanredcross.com/services/hss/aquatics/lts.html>).

As a lifelong swimmer, I've been touting the health benefits of my sport for ages. Swimming is highly aerobic (an earlier study with this same cohort found that swimmers' cardiorespiratory fitness was about equal to that of runners); it can be done year-round; and it's low impact, meaning it doesn't strain your lower joints as intensely as running and walking. "One might speculate that swimmers are less prone to lower-extremity injuries," Blair says.

In my role as the fitness editor of this magazine, I would be the last person to say you need to give up walking or running in favor of swimming. There's a huge body of evidence proving the health benefits of all three sports. Besides, if all my running pals descended on my neighborhood pool, I would never get in a decent workout. But

if you like to swim, this is just one more reason to dive in. "People who can't walk or run because of physical limitations—arthritis, for instance—can reap all the health benefits of an exercise program by swimming," Blair says.

—Gabrielle deGroot Redford



## • Cool Gear



### 360-DEGREE GOGGLES

With a low frame and curved lenses, Aqua Sphere's Kayenne goggles allow swimmers to see in all directions; \$24.95; [aquasphereswim.com](http://aquasphereswim.com).



### ULTRA-LIGHT FINNS

Improve your body position in the water while going easy on your ankles with Alpha-Fins; \$34.95; [aquasphereswim.com](http://aquasphereswim.com).

## Quick Tips

- **Body position is everything.**

The back of your head, your hips, and your feet should regularly break the surface during freestyle swimming.

- **A strong kick wins.** Some coaches recommend spending 50 percent of your time at first on kicking. To maintain proper body position, kick without a kickboard.

- **The best swimmers roll into each stroke.** Try it yourself by following each arm movement with a gentle hip roll. For more tips visit [usaswimming.org](http://usaswimming.org).