

SECTION 1

ABOUT MASTERS SWIMMING

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1. **What is Masters Swimming?**

'Masters Swimming' is the international organisation which promotes fitness, fun, and competition for adults through the sport of swimming. Swimmers around the world participate at all levels of ability, for recreation, general health and enjoyment, to competition at local, national and international levels.

2. **Who is eligible to join Masters Swimming?**

Any person aged 20 years or over may join Masters Swimming, with no upper age limit. (However the ability to hold New Zealand and World swimming records is only available from the age of 25 years). There is no requirement to reach any particular standard and Masters Swim Clubs in New Zealand are encouraged to take on swimmers who have just learned to swim, as well as those who have confidence and experience. There are some 50 clubs in New Zealand and about 800 members.

3. **How is Masters Swimming organised?**

The governing world body of Masters Swimming is FINA (World Swimming Federation) to which New Zealand Masters Swimming (NZMS) is affiliated, along with many other countries.

4. **Why Masters Swimming?**

Regular exercise contributes to good health and general well being, and swimming is considered by health professionals to be one of the best and safest ways to exercise. It benefits the cardiovascular system, reduces cholesterol, and has a positive effect on weight control, muscle tone, stress reduction, and endurance. It also helps to off-set the decrease in bone mass that is progressive with the ageing process. Swimming is also a recommended sport for adults because, unlike some other sports which involve impact on the ground or body contact, swimming occurs in a supportive environment and is generally injury-free.

5. **What does it cost to join?**

The national affiliation fee is currently \$50.00. Most clubs charge a club membership fee which can vary from \$20.00 to over \$100 per year. The reason why there are variations in individual club fees include the cost of renting pool time, the number of swimming sessions per week made available by the club, coaching, other activities and services offered by the club, and its own financial resources.

6. **Do I have to compete?**

Certainly not. It is up the individual to decide whether to compete or not. Swimmers have their own reasons for joining a Masters Swim Club. Many belong purely for the joy of improving their overall physical fitness, at the same time taking advantage of an opportunity to interact socially with other people with whom they would not otherwise come into contact.

For others, there is the challenge of proving themselves by competing against others in their own age category. For them, it is the thrill of competition. At the same time, attending any of the various swim meets affords an opportunity to socialise with swimmers from other clubs, to exchange ideas on

swimming and other matters and to travel around the country and also overseas.

Competitions are held in "short course" (25 metre) and "long course" (50 metre) pools and feature races in freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and individual medley (a combination of all four strokes). Competitors race in their own age categories organised in five-year increments (20-24, 25-29, 30-34, etc) to no upper age limit.

For those who think competition is only for the elite athletes, swim meets feature all calibre of swimmers racing against each other, or against themselves to better their previous best times. Fellow competitors often warmly applaud elderly or less able participants who complete, at least for him or her, an arduous event. Athletes, in general, always appreciate another athlete's gutsy performance. The competitor, in turn, reflects not only on the placing in the event, but also on the satisfaction of accomplishment.

7. What are the benefits of a Masters Swim Club?

A Masters Swim Club provides individuals with an opportunity to improve their own swimming and physical fitness, to swim in a squad of swimmers, to get coaching and stroke improvement, to attend swim meets and swim clinics, and to participate in social activities run by the club and the host clubs for swimming meets.

8. What activities do clubs undertake?

The provision of specific activities is up to each individual club and members can choose to participate in any, all, or often as each sees fit. Most clubs offer some or all of the following activities –

- Access to a pool by being part of a group
- General fitness through a regular swimming regime
- Concentrated training to become faster/fitter
- Increase swimming distance and stamina
- Coaching and stroke improvement
- Team spirit
- Swim meets
- Light weight training
- Club newsletter
- Swim Clinics
- Flexibility exercising
- Club socials
- Regular workouts
- Open Water swimming