

# Cheryl's Chief Instructor's Tips

## Deaf Friendly Swimming



We try our best to help all our members at the Turtles. This month, I would like to share with our members some information regarding deaf friendly swimming.

### There are two types of deafness

#### Conductive (Temporary)

The most common type of deafness in childhood.

Sound cannot pass through the outer and middle ear to the vestibule cochlear nerve.

Fluid builds up in the middle ear and it is known as glue ear. It can clear up naturally, but may need longer term surgical intervention with grommets or hearing aids.

#### Sensorineural (Permanent)

Most common in adults .

A person may be born with it but can develop later in life.

Sound is not processed effectively by the Vestibule (Cochlear Nerve) due to loss or damage to the hair cells in the inner ear. The semi-circular canals can also be affected and this affects the individual's balance.

Causes can be:

Long term exposure to loud noise

Ageing process

Genetic

Illness/infection – Cytomegalovirus (CMV), Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Meningitis

### Swimming & Technology

The main aids given to deaf people are Grommets, Hearing Aids and Cochlear Ear Plants. Below I have outlined what they are and what it means in relation to swimming.

**Grommets:** These are surgically implanted in the ear drum to relieve hearing difficulties. These fall out after 6 to 9 months as the child grows. Swimming can resume two weeks after having surgery from grommets being implanted. Swim moulds are also available to buy (High Street or on the NHS) and further protect ears for those who suffer infections. They tend to come in a variety of colours, sizes and with a neck cord or handles for easy insertion. However, they can temporarily, further reduce hearing in the pool environment. Furthermore, they are not suitable for underwater swimming and should never be shared with others. To hold them in place they should be used with a tight-fitting swim hat or neoprene headband. **Swimmers with grommets should always seek advice from their doctor or audiologist.**



## Cheryl's Chief Instructor's Tips (Contd.)

### Deaf Friendly Swimming (Contd.)

**Hearing Aids:** These work by amplifying the sound going into the ear. So, they do not restore normal levels of hearing and will amplify all sounds. Some hearing aids do have a facility called the 'T' setting to use on a hearing loop, meaning it cuts out background noise, which is good to have on poolside where acoustics can be poor. Most hearing aids are not waterproof and cannot be used when swimming. If this is the case, we would always ask you to bring your hearing aid to poolside to place on the side in a waterproof box. If we have a pool evacuation for any reason you should then be able to retrieve them and be able to receive communications. In addition, there have been some more recent technological advances with some hearing aids being waterproof. But you would need to check this with your doctor.

**Cochlear Implants:** These are electrodes that are planted in the inner ear to provide electrical stimulation of the nerves that the brain interprets as sound. Please ensure that Cochlear implants are stored in a waterproof box at poolside. Just so you can retrieve them with ease should we need to communicate with you.

Most people with hearing difficulties are able to swim on the surface of the water without taking additional precautions to protect their ears from the water. Some of our swimmers with sensorineural hearing, recommend Putty Buddies ear putty. See picture opposite. It is advisable that swimmers do not go under the water or dive with ear plugs in.



#### Facilities we offer & health & safety

We have a 25-metre swimming gala lane to the left of the pool (next to the window) that our competent swimmers regularly use. In addition, for our non-swimmers we have a training area in the shallow end of the main pool. This is shared with all our other members and their carers.

We do not offer teaching lessons as such, but we do have volunteer helpers that will work with you and your carer in the pool. Currently, we do not have sign language specialists at the club. So please bring someone with you if you need an interpreter to communicate. We will always ask you how you would like to communicate e.g. via lip reading, demonstrations or cue cards. We would always run through with you how you would like to be communicated with in the event of an evacuation and discuss pre-agreed signs. With most of our deaf swimmers we tend to ask others in the pool and on poolside to attract their attention (usually by waving) if there is an evacuation. We appreciate that evacuations are mainly auditory sounds with a whistle or alarm.

Please do let us know if you have balance difficulties that are associated with your hearing, as this may impact whether or not you can orientate yourself in the water. Getting in and out of the pool, a tumble turn or jumping and diving can be challenging. Furthermore, establishing the surface of the pool from under water can also be an issue especially following a dive.



## Cheryl's Chief Instructor's Tips (Contd.)

### Deaf Friendly Swimming (Contd.)

We have a variety of equipment that we can use to support your swimming aims from belts, aqua floats, noodles and floating toys. We also have spare goggles. However, we would always recommend that you bring along your own goggles.

#### Galas

At galas, we operate a touch start. We do not use strobe lighting for starts (as some swimmers may suffer with epilepsy). We will always ask how you would like to start a race. An official or volunteer will place a flat palm on the calf, ankle, front of the foot or middle of the back depending on your preference. For swimming backstroke, they could place a flat palm on the top of the swimmers hand. When the whistle is sounded they remove their hand indicating the start of the race.

#### Swimming Progression

Turtles is a grassroots community club that progresses swimmers (where possible) through to elite swimmers. If we see potential we will suggest other Swimming Clubs, in the locality who may be better placed to progress your swimming to the next stage (beyond Turtles). Swimmers who have a hearing loss of 55db or more can be classified as S15 and eligible to compete:

Regionally in pan-disability swimming championship.

Nationally and Internationally in deaf swimming championships, including the Deaflympics.

More information can be found on the GB Deaf Swimming website.

Source: Swim England website

<http://www.gbdeafswimming.org>

