

What You Need to Know About Flotation Devices

Choose Life Vests

Non-Swimmers should wear a Type II or III US Coast Guard Approved vest for flotation. It provides safety while allowing the swimmer to become comfortable enough in the water to learn. It allows for the necessary horizontal arm and leg movements and is safe and reliable. Make sure it is labeled as "approved by the US Coast Guard" - that means it has been impact tested.



Type II Vests

This "classic" preferred floating device is for calm, inland water where there is chance of fast rescue. It is most comfortable for recreational swimming because it is less bulky. Most (not all) will turn an unconscious person face-up in the water. All INFANT lifejackets are a Type II design, fitted for under 30 pounds.



Type III Vests

These vests are for use in calm water where there is good chance of fast rescue. This vest is designed more for boating activities but is also great for swimming and enjoying water parks. They will generally not turn an unconscious person face-up. CHILD sized vests are usually a Type III for over 30 pounds.

***Ask your coach how to perform the FIT TEST for your lifejacket!



Floaties, Arm Bands, and Swim Rings

They are NOT life saving devices and should not be relied upon to keep a child afloat in the water. There is a warning label on them indicating this. They are easily punctured and can spontaneously deflate in water.



What about Puddle Jumpers?

They are coast guard approved for open water however, it will encourage the vertical kick mentioned above. We do **NOT recommend** them. Choose a lifejacket instead!

Like floaties, they encourage vertical movement instead of horizontal movement, developing a bicycle kick instead of a flutter kick, and make it difficult to float properly – a critical survival skill. They also hinder arm movement, strokes, and the ability to place one's head in the water while swimming. They completely contradict the basics of good swimming. Children that wear these devices during play time often fear going under water and need extra lessons to correct the "bicycle kick" that results from long term use.