

Gender-Specific Swim Messaging

This resource was developed by the Everyone Swims! partnership to increase access to swimming and water recreation among low income and racially and ethnically diverse communities.

1. Our health is influenced by personal decisions, and is shaped by our environment. Right now, healthy choices like swimming are not easy to make in all our neighborhoods. Swimming and water recreation activities provide opportunities for exercise among people who currently have limited choices.
2. In addition to being a healthy choice, knowing how to swim is important for water safety. Drowning is the second leading cause of death among children and teens, and disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minorities. Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to learn how to swim. Knowing how to swim protects people from drowning-along with supervision, lifeguarded swim areas and life jackets.
3. Gender can be an additional barrier to making healthy choices. Refugees and minorities have greater barriers to swimming and water recreation. Among these barriers is the lack of recreational programming that acknowledges and respects their cultural values and beliefs. Gender specific swim programs have been demonstrated to reduce these barriers and improve access to healthy exercise choices to underserved populations in King County.
4. 'Gender-specific swim' (or 'gender swim') is the term used to refer to programming at pools in which there is an opportunity to participate in water recreation with only the same sex individuals, including staff and lifeguards, in the pool area. Gender swims are offered for modesty and cultural belief reasons, and are open to all people regardless of age, religion, race or ethnicity.

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