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Introduction to Port Nelson Sea Swims

Welcome to sea swimming. If you are new to the series or just visiting for a one-off swim, we want to welcome you and make sure that your experience is pleasurable and rewarding. If you're a regular, welcome back. Swims start at 6.15pm, but you need to register no later than 6pm. The information below will help you to understand how things work.

Yacht Club Facilities

We have a good relationship with the club and it's important we respect the fact that we are guests on their premises. No parking is available in the club area. Kayaker support paddlers may use the limited parks, as it would be unreasonable to expect them to carry their boats large distances. The parks marked RELISH, are for the sole use of restaurant customers. There is limited other parking, so plan to arrive early in case you need to walk a few hundred metres to the yacht club on Wakefield Quay.

No dogs please – even if they're tied up.

Toilets and showers

The swim series has the use of the yacht club deck area. There are toilets at the far end of the deck. The changing rooms are small. This year for the first time showers will be available. If you wish to take a shower, we ask that you make a donation of \$2 at the registration desk. Water heating is one of the yacht club's greatest costs.

Registration

With up to 150 swimmers to manage each night, we need to be organised. Please enter online. If you plan to be an occasional swimmer, you'll only need to register online once. That will give us all the detail we need to record your attendance and write your number on the back of your hand whenever you come. It's possible to enter on the night, but we need you to fill in a form which is time consuming for you and for us and can potentially delay the swim start for everyone, so **PLEASE ENTER ONLINE**.

Before the swim starts, we keep careful record of numbers and all swimmers are counted out of the water at race end. If for some reason you abandon the race and leave the water elsewhere, you must inform the timekeepers, otherwise we'll assume you're still in the water.

Safety

Your safety is our first concern. You will be issued with a number for the season when you register. This is written on the back of your hand each week, and the time keepers keep track of everyone entering the water, and of course checking that everyone comes out again. Irrespective of where you get out of the water, you must report back to the timekeepers to let them know you are safely out of the water.

A brightly coloured swim hat must be worn at all times while in the water. If you've registered for the season, you'll be issued with a free cap on registration. Swimmers who are not confident and plan to swim at the back of the short course should ask for a pink one. If you're an occasional swimmer, or need a spare, these can be purchased for \$5.

If you need help for any reason during the swim, stop and raise one hand. Kayak help will be the first to arrive, but if that's not sufficient an inflatable will soon be on the scene to help you from the water. If this happens, the timekeepers must be notified.

In 23 years we've never had to evacuate the water. Should this need to happen, a series of hooter blasts or a continuous blast from the safety boats will be your signal to head for shore.

Getting into the water and warming up

The yacht club ramp is slippery and dangerous. Please use the mats provided to enter and leave the water. At extreme low tides we'll start and finish on the sandy beach to the south of the ramp.

Support boats are launched on the south edge of the ramp. Please keep clear of this area when you enter the water. There is a rope running from the winch down to the water which it's easy to trip over. The boats have propeller guards, but there's still the potential for accidents, so keep clear of the stern of the boats. After boats are launched, there may be a period where the trailer is still in the water in the launch area – another reason to stay clear.

Wet suits

Many swimmers don't wear wetsuits. Using one will help with flotation and will enable you to extend your swimming for longer both at the start and the finish of the season. Darren Randle of Sportsgear will be on hand, selling wetsuits and giving advice on their use. You can email Darren at sportsgear@xtra.co.nz or phone him on 0274458212. If you have a problem with the wetsuit chaffing your skin, especially under around your neck and under your arms, a product called Glide can help (buy at sports shops). You'll see other swimmers using it. Vaseline can also help, but isn't recommended by wetsuit makers

If your wetsuit needs repair, a good contact is Kerry Coppel. His phone number is 0272178468

Swim categories

You can choose a long (up to 1200m) or short (200-500m) course. If you're less confident, please ask for a pink swim cap. Pink cap swimmers should enter the short course and start at the back of the field. You will have a special kayak escort to look after you.

You may wish to swim in this group every Thursday or just once while you build up confidence before transitioning to the longer swims. It is up to you. Swimming styles and strokes can be varied and you are encouraged to rest and tread water while you catch your breath. If you want to withdraw from the swim midway through, that is fine too.

We are aiming to empower you to become more confident. As the weeks go by you will be surprised at how quickly you progress in your ability and confidence. Much of sea swimming introduction is 'mind over matter'. Coping with being out of your depth in the sea, the motion of the waves and wondering what might be 'down there' makes the experience of sea swimming completely different from swimming in a pool.

Food and drinks

A light snack such as a banana is all you need before a swim. The yacht club snack bar will be open after the race if you want to have a coffee and a chat. A barbeque is provided on the pre-Christmas swim and at the end-of-year night.