

A Parents Guide - How To Survive Water Polo

Welcome to the world of water polo, where your life will never again be the same. Be prepared for changes – new friends, lots of time at games, tired and hungry kids, and a life revolving around “the schedule.” In some ways, it’s like having an infant at home again – when your kids are home they eat and sleep, but at least dealing with wet towels and Speedos is easier than soiled diapers. I hope that this little survival guide will help you keep you sanity.

1. Do yourself a big favor, and let your child be responsible for getting to and from practices. Buy an alarm clock, get the bike repaired, or have them find a ride from one of the other kids who drive. My parents even went so far as to make sure that the water polo player is the one who has a phone next to his/her bed, so the “Where are you?” phone calls from the coach at some ungodly hour go directly to the culprit, not the innocent bystander (parent). My rule is “Never wake a sleeping parent, unless it is absolutely necessary” – remember, your child is the one who is signed up for water polo, not you!
2. Remember that if your child is home, he or she is probably hungry and or tired. Have food on hand to keep cannibalism at bay! You will also save a lot of money on Domino’s and other fast food if you know that dinner is waiting at home. A crock-pot is great, just for keeping things warm until you get home, if nothing else. A rice cooker is also a good investment, because you can have a big pot of brown rice ready and waiting for hours – it’s good, nutritious, and you can throw together some stir-fry vegetables in five minutes to go with it. There are great frozen stir-fry vegetables pre-cut at grocery stores, add a little chicken or other meat and you are all set. This is also a good time to figure out how to use the timed-bake setting on your oven, if you happen to be so lucky!
3. Throw out your traditional ideas of breakfast after practice and during ‘Hell Week’, baked potatoes and chili is a favorite breakfast or even rice. Leftover pizza is always good, too, but your chances of ever seeing leftovers again are pretty slim.
4. Buy a Minivan or a car with a big trunk. You won’t believe the amount of kids and junk you need to haul around to tournaments. A general rule, I have found it very handy to keep the following items in the car: folding chairs, cushions, hats, visors, jackets, rain ponchos, blankets, towels, sunscreen, Kleenex, eyewash and Chap Stick. Trust me you will need them all at one time or another. You will also want to take a cooler to away games and tournaments.
5. There are enough expenses with traveling to games, so stock your cooler to help cut down on food cost. If nothing else, fruit and jugs of water are good to take. Often, there is just a short break between games, and even though the kids are hungry, they shouldn’t be eating, but a banana or a glass of juice may tide them over. I also like to take a thermos of water for instant soup on cold days. Skip the ice packs – freeze small plastic bottles of water to use instead. On the long drive home, there will at least be something left for you to sip on!

6. For all day or weekend tournaments, you will also want to take a change of clothes and an overnight bag. You may need them. Extra money is also a very useful item.
7. Most of the kids take headsets for the long drives either borrow one of theirs or take your own so you can listen to music you like. The library has some great books on tape, too. Pick out a couple of comedy tapes, too. You may need a good laugh. The idea of having nice conversations with your kids and their friends in the car on these trips is great, but in reality, if you are traveling more than 45 minutes, they will probably be sleeping. Enjoy the books on tape.
8. If you are eating out on the road, keep your eyes peeled for places that are especially good for hungry teenagers. Denny's is good for breakfast. Subway sandwiches are popular and buffets are great after a tournament when they can eat all they want. Very important – tell them to drink only water in restaurants and let them buy sodas or juice at a grocery store. You'll save a bundle.
9. Bring along something to widdle away the hours between games. Although water polo parents are lots of fun, and we can have a great time talking for hours on end, occasionally you may want to read a magazine, write a letter, or catch up on some work. Also, be on the lookout for interesting places to go in the area.
10. Let your kids talk to the coach about problems. There is always something that will come up, and usually the two of them will be able to handle it on their own. Don't get caught up as the middleman unless absolutely necessary. The coach spends so much time with these kids that he/she is practically another parent. We need all the help we can get, and each of the coaches really cares about these kids.

I hope you enjoy water polo as much as I do. Probably the best advice I can give is to relax and enjoy it. The kids grow up so fast and will be gone before you know it, so take the time to enjoy them, and their activities now. Even if it seems like you just see them sleeping in the back seat or devouring everything in sight. At least they are so busy and tired that they can't get into too much trouble. Take a picture of them sleeping in the car. It may be one of your fondest memories in years to come.

CYPRESS CREEK



Water Polo 2007