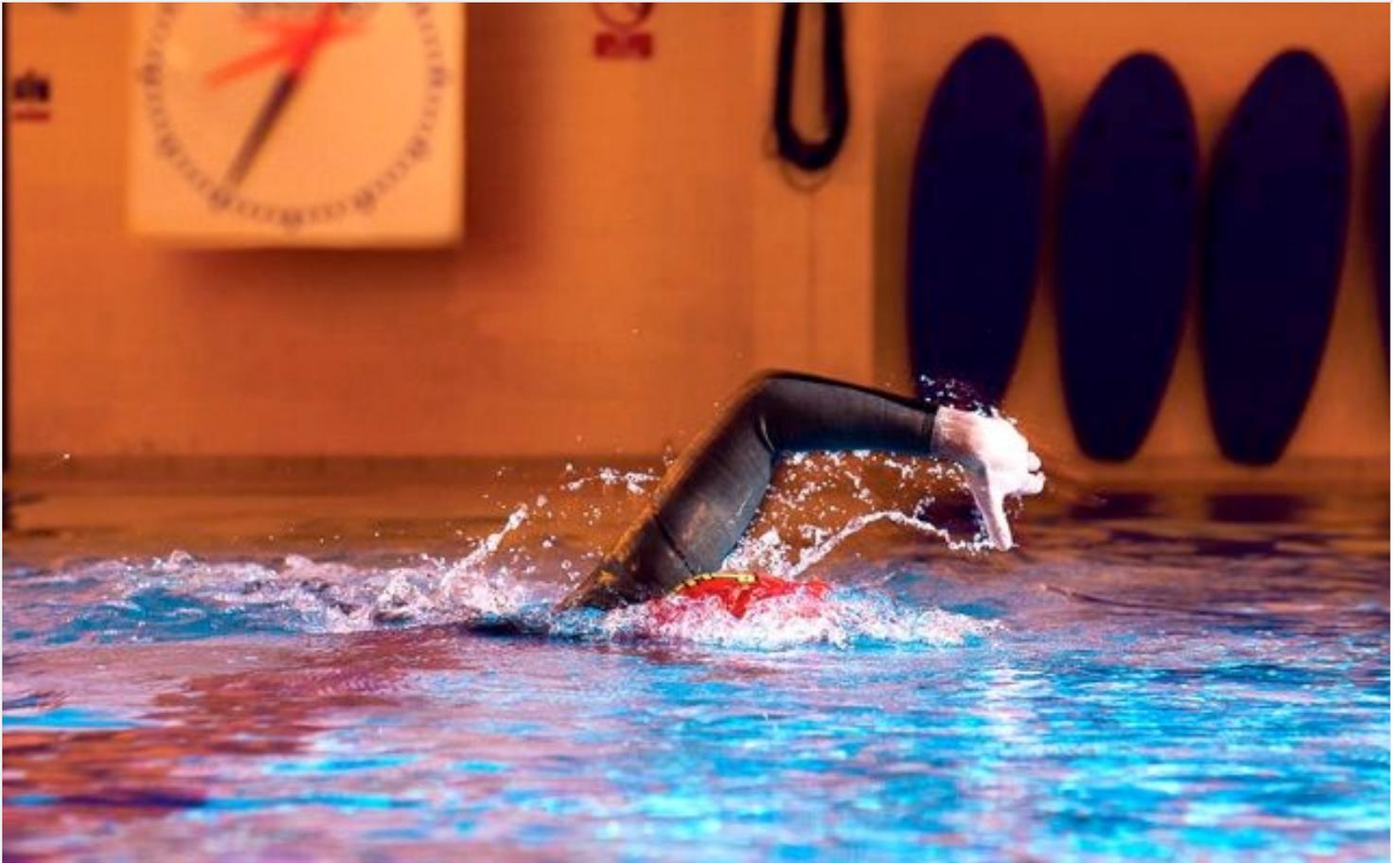


How to stop your legs from sinking in the swim



Are you struggling to keep your body level when swimming? Joe Beer explains what you need to do to stop your legs sinking in the swim...

The reasons behind the sinking leg syndrome are many and varied, and sadly can't be solved by core work alone. Instead, tweaking the following habits and techniques are key here:

Leg buoyancy

It's possible that low fat mass and high leg musculature can work against you. If you have dense legs and low fat around the waist/hip area you won't fall into the triathlete 'ideal' (low fat mass, ectomorph legs), so the legs will not naturally float horizontally.

Action: The techniques below are especially important as you have to compensate for 'heavy' legs (if you really do have them).

Kicking technique

If you never do kick drills you lose the direction, lift and small amount of propulsion

that the legs can give you. Sinking legs may not reduce propulsion but they increase drag, so despite a good arm action you go slower.

Action: Aim to swim at least 10-15% of your session as kick training, so as to think about propulsion, keeping the feet close to one another and with good body position. Take your pull buoy, write 'SWIM 10%' on it, and then use it to nudge you into doing just that.

Head position

If you tend to lift your head when breathing, naturally have a high head position and sight lifting the whole head out of the water, these all cause a see-saw effect to drop the hips (slightly) and legs (significantly).

Action: Use the analogy of trying to feel like you're swimming downhill and, more importantly, having your head looking forward and down (say 45° ahead, though there are varying opinions about this). When breathing, roll the head sideways but keep the lowest eye in the water and only just break the surface with enough mouth space to breathe.

Lung buoyancy

The lungs are central to body position as they hold air. If you tend to push the chest into the water it can tilt the whole body, raising the legs very slightly. Many have found that this 'downhill' feeling makes them focus on good body position – vital for those with heavy legs.

Action: Practise swimming with the chest pushing into the water (head position also not high) and being aware of the leg position this promotes.

Core strength

The core transfers and copes with forces through the mid section of the body, which is vital to keeping the propulsion, straight-line movement and body position all in correct balance. If you're weak in this area, have suffered lower-back injury or have sloppy-posture, this should be a major focus of your strength work.

Action: Integrate a core strength programme designed for your needs.

(Main image: Jonny Gawler)

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