



SHARK SWIM

AT

**THE FLORIDA
AQUARIUM** 

NOTE TO CAREGIVERS:

Shark Swim is offered on select days at 1:45 pm and 3:30 pm to up to four swimmers. Swimmers must be 9 years of age or older.

Swimmers should bring a towel. Swimmers are required to rinse off after their swim. The Aquarium will provide soap but you are also welcome to bring your own. You can wear a bathing suit under your wetsuit or wear the wetsuit alone.

Please make sure that you leave extra time for parking and walking to the Aquarium from the parking lot.

This experience is very **HIGH SENSORY**. Staff at The Florida Aquarium have been trained in sensory sensitivities, and will be as patient and accommodating as they can; however, please note that if your child struggles with sensory regulation, Shark Swim may be overwhelming.

There is a video of the experience that guests can watch located here:

<http://www.flaquarium.org/swimanddive>



Today I am going to The Florida Aquarium to do the Shark Swim!

When I arrive at the Aquarium, I will use the main entrance and let the person at the counter know that I am here for the Shark Swim experience.

We can wait on the benches at Guest Services for our divemaster to come get us.



I will follow the divemaster towards the Sea Star pavilion.

We will go through the doors and head outside to a ramp.

We will follow the divemaster up the ramp.

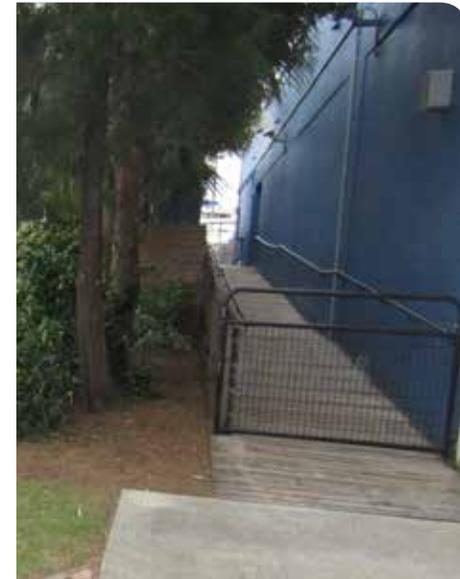
Divemaster



Sea Star Pavilion



Ramp



Our divemaster will take us to a room where we will watch a video about the creatures we are about to see and the experience we are about to have.

We will learn that the sharks are fed regularly and that they do not like to bite things bigger than themselves. The divemaster will keep us safe as long as we follow the rules.

TV Room



TV



After the video our divemaster will take us to the locker rooms.

There are two locker rooms; one is for men and boys, the other is for women and girls.

Girls' Locker Room



Boys' Locker Room



Inside the locker room there will be a locker with my name on it. It has a wetsuit that was picked just for me.

A wetsuit is a special bathing suit I will wear to swim with the animals.

Lockers



Your Locker



Bathrooms



There are showers and bathrooms in the locker room, too. If the wetsuit is dry, I will put it on my dry body.

I might need to get wet in the shower to help the wetsuit slide on easier. Wetsuits can also be a little tight, so I can ask for help if I have trouble putting on my wetsuit.

Showers

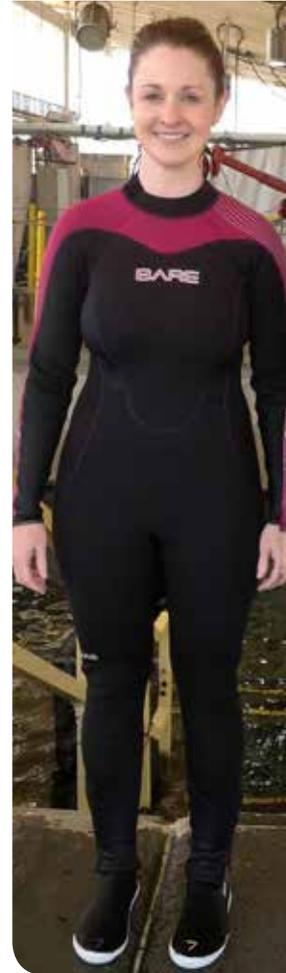


Back



My wetsuit zips up the back, and I put my booties on last.

Front



This is what my wetsuit should look like when I am done.



After I put on my wetsuit, I will follow my divemaster back into the Aquarium. We will take the elevator, escalator, or stairs to the Coral Reef gallery. I will see other habitats on the way, too, but I will stay with the divemaster.



If my mom, dad, or another adult is swimming with me, we will go upstairs together.

If an adult is not swimming with me, they will sit in the gallery and watch me swim from underneath.

After the Coral Reef gallery, I will follow my divemaster to our swim spot.

Stairs



Viewing Area



The first thing I will do is meet a new divemaster and get fitted with a mask. The mask will help me see underwater.

The masks are different colors, but I may not get to pick my favorite color, because the most important thing is to find the one that fits best. This is so I do not get water in my eyes.

Pick A Color



Mask



Once I have all of my gear on, I will rinse my feet in the foot bath to make sure I do not bring any germs into the habitat.

I will follow my divemaster down the stairs and sit on the steps. I will listen to the divemaster tell me about the gear.

Foot Bath



Divemaster



When I am standing in the water my divemaster will put my swim unit on me. A swim unit is like a vest with a tank of air that will rest on my stomach.

The swim unit may feel heavy when I am standing in the water, but it will not feel as heavy once I am swimming.

I will wear the swim unit so I can breathe and float. I breathe by putting my mouth around a mouthpiece made of rubber.



My divemaster will make sure my gear is working and give me instructions about what I can and cannot do in the habitat. I can put my face in the water when I am ready.

It might feel weird to breathe with the mouthpiece but I will get used to it. When I am in the water the fish might brush up against me but they will not hurt me.

If I need help I can lift my head up and my divemaster will come help me.



We will start our swim in the shallow reef. When we are finished in the shallow reef, our divemaster will bring us to the deep side.

When we swim on the deep side we will hold on to a bar so we can stay close to our divemaster. The deep side is where we will see the sharks.

Shallow Side



Deep Side



When the swim is over, I will follow a divemaster back to the locker rooms. The way down is different than the way up.

I will pass a lot of equipment that helps the Aquarium animals stay clean, healthy, and happy. This equipment might be loud, so I can cover my ears, or just keep my hands to my sides.

The stairs will be slippery so I will hold the railing. I can ask for help getting down if I am nervous.

Exit Stairs



Loud Equipment



Back in the locker room, I will take off my wetsuit, turn it right side out, and put it in a bin that says "Wash Me." I will shower and put my clothes back on.

When I am changed, the divemaster will take us back to the Aquarium. We can stay to see the other habitats, or we can go home for the day.

Wetsuit Bin



A Big Thanks From The Florida Aquarium

See you next time!

