The baby buoy

Water safety for small children in the home environment
Water safety for small children

A few more tips:

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Children have their activities, adults have theirs and they never mix. Or do they? Well, at bathtime the whole family can take part and have fun together. Bathing is a fun family activity that works just as well on the beach as in the swimming pool, or at home at bathtime. Water is tempting for play and experimenting, but this is exactly why it can also be dangerous. Particularly for small explorers who aren't yet able to swim and who don't understand the dangers.

Fortunately, fewer children drown each year. One explanation for this is that the Swedish Life Saving Society has invested a great deal in public swimming skills and knowledge about water safety. At present, the earliest that children must be able to swim is Year Six, but unfortunately 70 percent of drowning accidents among children occur before they have reached this age.

We don't believe a single child in Sweden should have to drown. That is why Trygg-Hansa, together with the Swedish Life Saving Society, has initiated the Baby Buoy project, where we encourage parents to teach their children to float at home in the bath. Being able to float is the first step to achieving increased safety in and around water. The ability to float isn't just about the child splashing around on its back for a few minutes; it also helps to make the child feel comfortable and safe and to have fun in the water and, over time, will hopefully contribute to reducing the number of drowning accidents.

Many children are absolutely mad about bathtime, while others hate becoming wrinkled. Regardless of your child's attitude to water, this is a programme with load of tips to help make bathtime a fun time and to reduce the risk of accidents.
Water safety for small children

Bathing together with your child is a fun activity that brings you closer together. At the same time, there are two important safety aspects you must always consider:

1. Never leave the child alone
2. The water temperature must be correct
The most important thing is that you must never leave small children alone in the bath, not even for a short time when the telephone rings. You must always remain within reach of the child. If, for some reason, you must go away during bathtime, take the child with you. Do not allow siblings to watch over small children who are bathing; an adult must always be present.

It is important to remember that a baby's skin is sensitive; always check the temperature of the water before putting the baby into it. The water should feel warm, but absolutely not hot. The perfect temperature is 37 degrees. Buy a bath thermometer to make it easier to keep track of the temperature. Taps where the water temperature exceeds 60 degrees should be fitted with protection.
A few more tips:

- Wrap the hot tap in a wet towel to remove the risk of the child burning or hitting itself on the tap during bathtime.

- When the child is a bit older, it is a good idea to make the bathtub safer with a non-slip mat or self-adhesive non-slip stickers.

- Don't overestimate the safety of bath accessories. Suction cups on bathing chairs can come loose and the chairs can tip over if the child makes a sudden movement.

- Always ensure that you have fun together while bathing. Smile and laugh a lot and your child will love to bathe.
Because it is important that you never leave your child alone in the water, prepare the things you will need for bathtime before you place the child in the bath water. Here is a list of things you may need:

- Towels
- Face flannels
- Baby oil or baby soap
- Baby shampoo
- Baby brush or comb
- Toys

Have everything to hand so you don't need to search for something during bathtime. If you do need to go and fetch something you have forgotten, do not under any circumstances leave your child alone in the bath. Wrap your child in a towel and take it with you.
Your baby's first bath is a real milestone! It is a cosy activity that brings you closer and allows you to have fun together. Some babies love splashing about in water from the start, while others are a little uneasy the first few times they bathe. As a new parent it isn't easy to know when and how you should get your baby used to water. In this section we provide some tips on how you can make bathtime both easier and more fun. The most important thing is to keep calm. Bathing a slippery and squirming child requires practice, but it will get easier each time you do it. Smile and laugh a lot so it is easier for your child to overcome any uncertainty they may initially feel about the water.
When you can begin bathing
You and your baby can bathe together as soon as the navel has healed and the child is just a few days old. It is best to bathe small babies before they eat, providing that they aren’t too hungry. If you bathe a baby directly after it has eaten, there is a risk that the baby may need to vomit. Choose a calm period when you won’t be interrupted and you are not tired.
The easiest way to get your child used to water is to bathe at home. You can do this in a basin or bathtub. When the child is very small they can also bathe in the handbasin in the bathroom or the kitchen sink. On the next page you will find some tips for a successful bathtime.

Bathtime hazards

- Remember that you must never leave the child unsupervised. You must always remain within reach.
- A baby's skin is sensitive to heat, so always check the water temperature using your wrist or elbow.
- Never practice diving under the water in the bathtub or basin.
• Run water that is approximately 37 degrees. If you don’t have a thermometer, check the water using your elbow or wrist to make sure it isn’t too hot. If you bathe together in a bathtub remember that the child’s skin is much more sensitive than your own.

• You can begin bathing with the child on its back. Hold the child so that the arms and legs can move freely. It is important that it feels right for both of you. If you are bathing together with the child, hold the child with one hand under each armpit, supporting the head. If you are standing beside the bath or basin, keep one hand under the head and the other under the buttocks or the soles of the feet.

• The baby should not be lifted in the water, but simply supported from beneath so that it can use its own buoyancy.

• Hold the baby so that the entire body (not the head) is under water. If the baby’s body is wet it will quickly become cold in contact with the air.

• Talk to the child a lot during bathtime and maintain constant eye contact so that you can read the child’s signals. Lavish your good little baby with plenty of praise and don't forget to have fun together.

• Don't be surprised if your child screams; this is simply a reaction to an unknown experience. Comfort your child by smiling, caressing and singing. The child will soon love bathtime.

• The first few times you bathe your baby, a few minutes will be enough. When the child has become more accustomed to the water, you can progressively increase the time in the water.
Floating skills
– exercises for when you have made some progress

There are children who never want to leave the water and there are children who never want to bathe. If your child likes playing in the water, you can begin with more advanced bathing games at home, but wait until the child is around nine months old.

Below you will find some tips for fun exercises that you can do together at home so that your child can learn to float. Floating isn't just about your child splashing around on its back for a few minutes; it also teaches the child to feel safe and have fun in the water and will contribute to reducing the number of drowning accidents.
The exercises are divided into three different levels, with the first level focusing on getting the child used to having water on its face, the second level is about teaching the child to find its own balance and the third level is about teaching the child how to float on its back.

The point at which you can begin with the different exercises varies from child to child and you must experiment to see how ready the child is to learn to float. Normally very small children have difficulty performing the exercises, so wait until they are around 9 months.
The water jug
(approximately 9 months)

Use a water jug or bucket to get the child used to having water on its face. Children learn by copying, so you can bathe together with your child and begin by showing how the exercise is done. Plus it will be twice as much fun when you are both involved in the game! Let a small amount of water pour down your face and then do the same thing with your child. Gradually increase the amount of water that runs down the face.

You can begin by allowing your child to play with the stream of water and pouring water over the child's body so that it becomes used to it.

Bubbles
(approximately 1 year)

When the child is a little older, around a year old, you can begin training breathing out and blowing bubbles under the water. Begin by doing the exercise yourself and then allow your child to copy you. Blow out air in the water so that bubbles form, but don't put your mouth too far below the water. Do the exercise slowly and clearly. Make a sound like a car engine with your lips and the game will be both more fun and easier!
Blow a ping-pong ball across the surface of the water
(approximately 1 year)

Another fun exercise is to have a ping-pong ball in the bath. Place the ping-pong ball on the surface of the water and let the child blow at it to move it. If the child has difficulty blowing hard enough to move the ball one useful trick is to use a straw. Then they can make the ball move more easily by directing the flow of air.

Look underwater
(approximately 1 year)

You can also practice looking underwater when the child has turned one, but remember that age is very individual.

Hold up several fingers under the water and allow your child to put its head under water and look at them. You can also put a mirror under water that your child can look into.
Find the balance

All children are different and it is important that they are allowed to develop at their own pace and on their terms. Some love water, while others refuse to go in it. The important thing is to have patience and always have fun together. Once the child has succeeded with the simpler exercises and is used to the water, the next step is to teach the child to float so that it can find its own balance on its back.

This is how you do it

1. Place the child on its back in the water.
2. Maintain eye contact with the child.
3. Hold the child so that you don't prevent it from moving its legs.
4. Hold the child carefully with a couple of fingers under the head so that it finds its balance point and floats as much as possible through its own ability.
5. If you bathe with the child, move with the child in the water so that it feels the movement of the water and can experience its own buoyancy.

Tip! When children are lying on their backs, some automatically hold their legs straight up in the air or put their toes in their mouths. One tip is to simply hold your hand under its head so that the child finds its floating point more easily.
Floating on the back

When the child lies on its back in the water, only supported under the head, the child has a freedom of movement that cannot be achieved on land. It is a fantastic feeling! The child can move its arms and legs freely and meets no resistance from the bath.

This is how you do it

1. Place the child on its back with calm movements.
2. Maintain eye contact with the child.
3. Hold one hand underneath the head.
4. Lightly support the soles of the child's feet with the other hand.
5. Allow the water level to be just above the child's ears.
6. Bear in mind that the child should float and not be lifted.
7. Allow the child to float as much as possible through its own ability.
Once the child has outgrown the bath at home, you can continue practicing water safety and swimming skills outdoors or in a swimming pool. Learning to swim isn't just fun, but it is also a life skill and the sooner it can be done the better. Most children are not mature enough to learn how to swim before they are four years old, but when they learn is very individual. Swimming skills have nothing to do with age; children can get used to water even when they are very small through baby swimming classes.
Baby swimming

Baby swimming involves children younger than two years of age bathing together with one of their parents under the guidance of a trained baby swimming instructor. At baby swimming sessions, the child has more freedom of movement than at home in the bathroom and can do other types of exercises, such as diving under the water – something that should never be tried at home. At baby swimming it is always you as the parent who decides if and when the child should do the exercise in question. The activity is done and limits are set on the child's terms.

All children who are considered healthy by their parents can attend baby swimming. Even children with some form of handicap can take part in baby swimming sessions, but if there is any uncertainty about the child's health, a doctor must always be consulted before you begin. All children from three months to two years are welcome at baby swimming sessions. If the child was born prematurely, then count three months from the estimated date of birth. The child must weigh at least four kilos and the navel must be healed.
Swim school

The Swedish Life Saving Society organises swim schools across the country, where children learn more than just swimming. They also learn to feel safe, happy and free when near water. More information about swim schools can be found at www.svenskalivraddningssall-
Find out more at
www.trygghansa.se/babybojen