

# GROWING UP IN THE WATER, THE BENEFITS OF INFANT SWIMMING.



## An early start to swimming lessons can give your baby a better start in life, with advantages both in and out of the water

### Enhancing physical development

Swimming lessons help and support a child's physical development. In the water, babies can exercise more muscles and are less restricted by gravity and their inability to sit and stand.

Increased muscular strength can help in the acquisition of physical skills such as crawling and walking. Doctors recommend swimming for asthmatic babies, and it has also been proven to help developing cardiovascular systems.

### Accelerating social development

An ambidextrous activity (using both sides of the body), swimming can help develop gross motor skills, encourage coordination and the integration of the left and right sides of the brain. As your child gets older, this will aid language development which will help with reading and writing.

### Parents benefit too

Swimming lessons are an ideal bonding opportunity for parents and children. Learning, playing and having fun together in the pool becomes a treat for many children and valuable one-on-one time with their parents.

### What if my child cries?

It is perfectly normal for your child to cry in their first lesson, or any other lessons. Children cry for all kinds of reasons, not only because they are in a pool. The main thing is to relax and settle them while they are in the pool, they should not be taught to associate crying with getting out of the pool.

Your instructor can help settle your child – they have done this many times before!

**Hint:** Try to avoid scheduling your child's swimming lesson during their usual feeding or nap times.

### Maintaining familiarity with water

Having spent 9 months suspended in their mother's womb, newborn babies have a natural affinity with the water. Infant swimming lessons, like bath times, help maintain their love of water and stop them becoming fearful.

### Gaining a skill for life

By taking your infant to swimming lessons, you are not only setting them on the path to learning a skill for life, you are also helping teach them respect for water, so they will be less likely to wander into dangerous situations.

### When can I start my baby swimming?

Learning to swim can almost start at birth! Bath times naturally become a place of fun, enjoyment, stimulation and learning.

At Shayne Reese Swimming we introduce babies into the pool when they are around 5 months old. At this age babies have good head and neck control, they are becoming interested in their surroundings and new activities and parents are comfortable with holding them in the water.

### How do babies swim?

Until they are about 4 years old, children don't have the fine motor skills to swim with a freestyle action. However, they can be independently mobile in the water long before this age by using a dolphin like wriggle to propel themselves through the water. As they begin to learn to crawl, they use a similar action to propel themselves through the water.

A child's development on land is strongly related to what they can achieve in the water. When teaching babies to swim the most important thing is exposing them to developmentally appropriate activities that cater for their individual needs while encouraging independence, under adult supervision.



## “Learning to swim can almost start at birth”

We would like to thank; Kidsafe, Royal Life Saving Society, Kidsafe Victoria and splashmagazine.com.au for data used in these information sheets.