



A Helpful Sensory Swim Guide For your First Baby Swim

Together let's make your first baby swim special so baby feels safe, calm and contented.

Why not make your swim day your day to relax, before and after swimming too.

There are no phones,
no distractions,
enjoy this
perfect time
to connect.

A photograph of a woman and a baby in a swimming pool. The woman is on the right, smiling and looking at the baby. The baby is on the left, looking at the camera with a happy expression. The water is light blue and slightly rippled.

we love making strong connections in water



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Before your first swim

Find out those little details that will make your swim journey feel at ease. Do you know where to park or if you need to bring anything special to the pool like your own little change mat?

What does your baby need to wear? Most babies wear a double nappy system in the pool. Often babies won't need anything else.

Did you know that they will regulate how they feel through being skin-to-skin? Their heartbeat and their temperature. They will love to feel the water and your skin, it will make them feel safe, loved, calm and relaxed.

It is great if you can visit the pool first, to have a simple walk through from the car park, to the changing rooms and pool. So, your first swim feels nice and familiar.

Baby will need a little feed after their swim, so find out where you can do this, so you are comfy. And don't forget to take a snack and drink for you too.



Pre swim check list



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Make your swim day your special day

Make swim day a day to relax, before and after.

Is your little one rested, fed and ready?

Plan swim times around when they are most active and alert.

Create little routines and rituals that your baby will love and remember.

your swim journey starts at home

"We are going swimming"

Give little running commentaries.

This helps to let your baby know where they are going, and what is happening...

When experiences are new our senses are on high alert to scout out the environment, to make sense, process and respond.



Set up for Success



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Sensory Harmony

Did you know that our senses of smell is linked to the emotional part in our brain?

Babies have highly sensitive sense of smells. Our top tip would be to pick and stick to one soothing smell for lotions, and shower gels then pack your swim kit with these in.

Your baby will soon associate this smell with comfort & feeling safe; like lavender or chamomile which are both naturally calming.

Go slow, take time to plan, breathe and enjoy the before swim time and after too.



Sensory swim
love and harmony



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At the pool

Take your pool entry nice and slow
Talking with baby as you go, so you both feel in flow.

WAIT

It's good to pause when you and baby need to, there is no rush.

WATCH

Observe how they are feeling, tune into their little cues.

WONDER

Your baby will be soaking up all of the different sensory sensations.

Follow their gaze and be curious too.

Check in with yourself too... how are you feeling?

Babies are so clever on picking up on how we feel too.

It's ok and natural to feel a little nervous at first too.

you are both learning together

Go with the flow

Brain Booster

TALK

Baby will love hearing your voice.

Talk to them softly, so they can make sense of their new water world.

EYE CONTACT

Making easy eye contact is like a little hug from the inside.

It shows baby you are there, and you see and hear them, for who they are.

It makes them feel calm and safe too.

OBSERVE

Tune into to how they are feeling and what they are seeing.

Continue to talk to them, explaining what you are both doing.

This is a big part of their brain trusting the pool and helps them to feel safe.

It helps them know you are there and shapes the brain to settle itself.

RESPOND

Respond to your baby's changes in mood.

Perhaps they need more to stimulate them like splashing and tracking toys?

Or more upright holds and face to face?

Just like us, baby is learning all the time and will love being with you...



When I feel safe I will be ready to explore..



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Unfolding Personalities

Just like us your baby will have their own sensory preferences.

Enjoy watching these unfold in the pool.

They will have so much sensory information flowing through their brains, it will be important and up to us to moderate and filter these, so baby feels supported, safe and calm.

Ask yourself, how do they liked to be held?

Your baby's sense of touch is highly developed, do they enjoy feather fingers or a tight snug hold? Have a think about how baby responds to touch at home too and bring this same awareness into the pool.

Sensory experiences shape our baby's developing brain and helps them to feel regulated. By providing sensory experiences in the right time and the right way, we are providing baby with a positive sensory swim experience.



Little Butterflies.... it's time to fly!



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Sensory rich experiences

Perhaps your baby loves splashing and bouncing up and down?

Allow them to splash, copy them and join in.

They are seeking movement opportunities to satisfy their internal vestibular system.

Enjoy this fun time together.

Perhaps they love putting toys in their mouth?

They are exploring how they feel this is how they learn and explore their world.

If they don't enjoy tummy time at home, don't worry in the pool they will learn lots of little supported tummy time holds and moves on your hands.

This is great for their development it strengthens their muscles and at the same time helps them to lose some of the reflexes they were born with.

Baby is building new connections in their brains, they are mapping experiences and creating a new library of sensory sensations. Which is so vital to create strong brain and body foundations, not just for their first year....

but for life too!



Babies are little sensory sponges



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when will my baby?

Splash? Kick?

Dip and dive under the water?

Swim on their own?

Roll, sit, crawl, become independent?

Like learning to walk, which can of course take over a year, learning to swim is the same. It can take time, lots of practice and repetition. Babies all learn at different times and in different ways... so enjoy going at baby's pace.

Whilst milestones are in pencil, if you do notice anything about your baby's development... speak to your health professional.

We often say the water is transparent and revealing, which means you may notice something about your baby's development that you didn't on dry land. And that is ok and a good thing too. Learning all about your baby's development is just one benefit of starting baby swimming early. Any developmental delays can be picked up early, and you can seek the support you need so your little one doesn't have to compensate and struggle later in life.



we all need a little hand sometimes