



## WELCOME TO BABY AND FAMILY SWIMMING!



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## 1. WHAT IS BABY SWIMMING?

Baby swimming is a shared moment of exercises and play between babies and parents, monitored by a trained instructor in warm water. The ideal age to begin baby swimming is approx. 3-5 months. At this age, the child stays awake and has the stamina to move around during the whole baby swimming session. The child must weigh a minimum of 5 kg to be able to maintain a comfortable body temperature in the 32 (celsius) degree water.

Baby swimming is a joint family hobby where the baby is the main focus. Every activity should be happening on the terms of the baby, so that he/she will later see the element of water as something positive.

During baby swimming the child will not learn to swim independently but will learn how to play and dive in the water with the assistance of the parents. Baby swimmers benefit from the diving reflex, which occurs for babies under the age of approximately 8 months. The diving reflex is a protective reflex which prevents water from flowing into the child's airways when being under water. Using this reflex, the child will learn how to hold his/her breath under the water even before the diving reflex naturally would vanish. The amount of diving and the duration of the dives are restricted to the child's age, and this is monitored by the instructors. This will minimize the excessive swallowing of the water and avoid overstraining the child.

The requirement for a safe baby swimming session is the constant guidance of the parents and the presence of a trained baby swim instructor. In Finland the Finnish Swim Teaching and Lifesaving Association and Folkhälsan are responsible for the training of baby swimming instructors. The background associations have an important role in the surveillance of baby swimming. During baby swimming the responsibility of the child is always with the parents who will become the main instructors of the child as he/she grows.

### GOALS FOR BABY SWIMMING

- family playtime
- bringing families together for social interaction
- leading towards a healthy and regular sports activity
- the child will learn to enjoy and relax in the water
- eases learning how to swim later on in life
- supports the rehabilitation of disabled children and their parents
- adds water safety



## 2. PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

- Discuss about baby swimming at the child health center
- Three month vaccination should be activated before beginning baby swimming
- If you are afraid of the water, try to overcome your fear, because it will reflect on the child
- Accustom the child to the time of the baby swimming by bathing them at that time.
- Accustoming the child to noises of the pool area is beneficial

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR BATHING AT HOME

- Both parents should participate in bathing the child at home
- Do not bathe a tired or a hungry child
- Fill the tub with lots of water
- The bathwater's temperature should gradually be lowered from 37 to 32 °C
- Talk to the child in varying tones of voice and bathe the child in a playful manner
- Bathe the child on his/her back, stomach and both sides
- Switch the position of the child frequently, hold the whole body in the water in all positions (keep the ears under water when holding the baby on his/her back)

### PREPARING FOR THE SWIMMING SESSION

- Reserve enough time when you are coming to session.
- Make sure the child's basic needs are satisfied (sleep, food), this will enhance the child's comfort in the water. Never feed the child immediately before swimming. At least 1,5hours should have passed after the latest feeding to prevent puking and poopoo.
- The child can be carried in a baby's carryon.
- Bring along a big towel to the poolside to keep the child warm and comfortable.
- Wash yourself and your child without a swimsuit on before coming to the pool. Wash from head to toe and remember also to wash the genital areas. Remove your make-up and jewelry: rings, piercings, bracelets, necklaces etc. Jewelry gathers dirt. Long hair should be tied back after the shower and/or use a swim cap.
- The child must wear a swimsuit with tight trouser legs or a swimming diaper.
- Move calmly in the shower rooms and the pool area to avoid slipping and falling.
- You are not allowed to enter the baby swimming pool before the instructor is in place AND has advised the families of that group to enter the pool.
- After your session you must leave the pool area to the shower room.
- Do not go to the sauna before swimming!



### 3. THE FIRST SWIMMING SESSIONS

During the first swimming sessions the child is accustomed to the pool facilities, the water and the parents are taught how to hold the child in the water. When entering the water, the child should be held in a gentle grasp. Eye and skin contact should be kept between the parent and the child. Keep talking to the child in a soothing voice whilst kneeling down in the water and dip yourself in water up to your shoulder level. By massaging the child, you can help the child to relax, feel warmer and safer in the pool. After the first dip in the water it is favorable to stay in the pool and move around as much as possible.

When keeping the child in an upright position it is important not to squeeze the child too hard. To avoid the child from getting cold try to keep most of the child's body under the water. When lying on the back the child's ears should be under water whilst the parent holds one hand under the back of the head and the other under the buttocks of the child. Constant eye-contact and gentle movements will help the child to get used to lying on his/her back in the water.

While lying on his/her stomach the child will probably make his/her first swimming like movements. With some assistance the child gets used to moving forward and will move his/her feet and legs more actively. If the youngest babies lack power to carry their head the parent may assist the child by placing the palm under the child's chin.

During the first swimming sessions the parents are taught how to hold their child in the water. The grasp should be light with a minimal amount of support to enhance the independent movements of the child and keep the main part of the child's body under water. Upright-, facing up- and facing down -positions are altered frequently whilst playing and moving around the pool. When the child has gotten used to the different positions the parent can handle the child more briskly and with a faster pace in the games. Swimming is hard work for the child and every once in a while the child needs a break. Every swimming session should be enjoyable for the child.





## 4. CHALLENGES IN BABY SWIMMING

If the child is having a "bad day" and nothing seems to work it is better to cut the swimming session short and try again next time. If the child gets mad, don't let him/her cry loudly for a long period of time as the other babies can easily join in with the crying.

During the "transition time" in baby swimming (6-9 months) the child should be brought to baby swimming even on a "bad day". During this phase the most common problem is being shy of strangers and staying at home won't help the child socialize. During this phase even observing others and being in the water is beneficial.

### DIVING

About one child in a thousand experiences a so called "overreaction" by holding their breath longer after a dive. It is unpleasant for the child but completely harmless. The child will eventually grow out of the "overreacting" and the diving reflex is always tested before diving exercises. If the child holds his/her breath for longer than normal, the diving will be pushed to later and the child will continue with water pouring exercises.

### FAECES

It is impossible to monitor and avoid babies peeing in the pool but there is not a risk for infection because baby urine is clean. Poop on the other hand contains bacteria. Should this kind of an accident occur in the pool, the pool would be closed and there would be no more baby swimming that day. These incidents are rare though.

### EAR INFECTION

Ear infection is a common and very painful childhood disease. Water in itself doesn't cause ear infections- the child needs to be exposed to a virus or bacteria to get infected. To prevent ear infections avoid coming to the pool if the child has a cold. If an ear infection has been diagnosed the child shouldn't come to the pool before a post check-up with a doctor to assure that the ear is healthy.

### SWALLOWING WATER

Whilst diving, floating and during other circumstances while the child's head is under water the child may swallow some water. A small amount of water is harmless but large quantities strain the child's blood circulation and cause disruptions in the hydration levels. This requires however a 6% increase in the child's bodyweight and a child can swallow these amounts of water only if he/she is allowed to dive too many times or turned on their back right after diving.

### INFECTIONS AND WOUNDS

Fever, open and/or abscessed wounds, all sorts of infections, such as: eye- or cuticle infections, infected rashes and other exuding skin infections are obstacles to participating in baby swimming. Not until the infection is completely cleared it is suitable to continue baby swimming. This applies for the child as well as the parents!



## 5. ALWAYS REMEMBER...

Here are a few tips that you should always keep in mind before attending each lesson and also afterwards. By keeping these things in mind, we all will have a pleasant swimming experience!

### LET'S KEEP THE WATER CLEAN

Adult swimmers' personal hygiene has a major impact on the water purity in the swimming pool. Small babies (under 7 months) are however mainly clean and before swimming only the baby's diaper area needs to be washed.

Bacteria is being spread to the pool area especially by adults. Therefore please follow carefully the instructions below:

- Wash your whole body from top to toe in the shower before swimming.
- Shower always without your swimsuit on.
- Intimate areas should be washed extra carefully.
- Wash carefully your hair, head and scalp so that the possible grease, dandruff and torn hair will not end up in the pool.
- Wash away carefully all the make-up, body lotion and chemicals (perfume, deodorant, hair spray etc.) from your body.
- Long hair should be tied before entering the pool or wear a swimming cap.
- Watches, necklaces and jewelry should not be worn in the pool.
- Swim only in a proper swimsuit. Sports shorts are not allowed for swimming. Even though the city of Espoo allows swimming shorts in the swimming halls, we still recommend, for hygiene reasons that everyone would wear a swimsuit made out of swimsuit material.
- Do not go to the sauna before swimming. The sweating will continue in the water. Please notice that if you take your baby with you to the sauna you should not throw water on the stove.
- Do not swim under the influence of alcohol or in a hangover.

### DO NOT PARTICIPATE WHEN YOU ARE ILL

Each swimmer has an influence on how the infections and bacteria spread in the swimming pool. Do not participate in baby swimming if you are ill. This applies for both adults and children.

### SKIN CARE AFTER SWIMMING

The pool water has individual impact on different babies' skins. Normally a baby's bathing does not need to be restricted in any way. If the baby's skin however feels very dry using body lotion immediately after drying baby's skin with the towel is recommendable. If the baby or the adult has skin diseases or open wounds these should be treated before joining the group.



## 6. PAYMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Baby swimming will be billed monthly during the season. The cost of baby and family swimming is 18,00 €/session, the price includes two adults and one child. If you have a second child joining in the family swimming the price is 22,00€/session. The cost of sibling swimming is 22,00 €/session, the price includes two adults and all the children under 7 years old in the family.

### ABSENCES

Absences cannot be replaced with sessions in other groups. Short (1-3 times) absences do not affect the course billing.

However, longer absences (at least a month consecutively) can be compensated by a doctor's certificate of the absence. We will compensate a maximum of six times in a row. After that billing continues normally.

- *The doctor's certificate must include the time period when you were unable to attend the swimming class due to an illness. The certificate can be submitted electronically/scanned to the address [vauvainti@cetus.fi](mailto:vauvainti@cetus.fi), or by mail to Cetus office (Cetus, Espoonlahdenkuja 4, 02320 Espoo).*

NOTE! We will refund the amount in your upcoming invoice unless otherwise agreed with the office. You may not edit the amount to be paid on your invoice yourself.

### CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT

As a result of an unexpected cancellation of the session there will not be neither reimbursement of the participation fee nor an extra session. Unexpected events include eg. vomit or poopoo in the pool. Whenever this happens the pool is not safe to be used for a limited amount of time.

### THE TERMS OF CANCELLING IN THE BABY- AND FAMILY SWIMMING

When you wish to cancel the baby or family swimming you have to inform the office by phone or e-mail at least FOUR WEEKS before your last swimming session date. Therefore the day we receive your email or your phone call will determine the date from where the cancellation period of four weeks begins.

### CHANGING THE BEGINNING DATE

When you accept a place in the swimming group it can be kept reserved to you for one month (due to travelling etc.). After one month the billing will start and continue. If you want to change the beginning date you must inform Cetus' office right after registration. Absences reported afterwards will not be taken into account in the billing.





## 7. SWIMMING HALL INSTRUCTIONS

- Arrive to the swimming hall about 15-20 min before the swimming group begins. If you come with a car, remember the parking disc. The swimming time lasts about 30 minutes.
- The parents are responsible of the children in the changing- and showerrooms and in the pool.
- One has to leave the pool area when the session ends.

### KESKI-ESPOO SWIMMING HALL

- You will get a swimming bracelet from the cashier. The men use the general changing room. The women can use the group changing rooms 1 and 2 or the general changing room.
- Please, open the group changing room's door carefully, someone can stand behind the door.
- The Therapy-pool is found on your right side when coming out from the general changing room. The pool is located behind the courtin and by using the the door on the left side of te courtin you will find the pool. The entrance to the Therapy-pool is straight from the group changing room.

### LEPPÄVAARA SWIMMING HALL

- You will get a keybracelet to the general changing rooms from the cashier.
- Use the entrance across the cashier, it will lead you to the swimming hall's innerpool's changing rooms. The changing rooms are located on the second floor.
- The therapy-pool is located between the lifes savers' booth and the jumping pool.



## 8. FAQ

### **MAY OLDER SIBLINGS JOIN BABY- AND FAMILY SWIMMING?**

Always contact Cetus office if you have siblings joining in the course. Sessions are planned for 3 months to 3-year-old children and older siblings may join but are not taught on their individual level. If the child is already at schoolage (7years old) joining the group is an exception and we expect the child to behave properly. Size difference between a 7 year-old and 1 year-old can be great. The teachers have the right to ban the child if the behaviour of that child causes a safety risk.

### **HOW DO BABIES HOLD THEIR BREATH?**

All babies are born with a diving reflex that closes the airways when the baby is under water. Diving reflex will disappear at approximately the age of eight months. It is most common to join baby swimming when the child is under six months old so the reflex can be used. Baby can then learn to hold his/her breath under water before the reflex is gone. Reflex is activated when the baby has about 5ml of water in the back of the throat. Diving is not the main goal in baby swimming and it is practiced merely enough to teach the child to hold his/her breath if submerging.

### **WHAT SORT OF SWIMSUIT SHOULD THE CHILD HAVE? SHOULD THE CHILD USE A SWIM DIAPER?**

We recommend a swimsuit instead of swimpants because in a swimsuit the child is easier to hold (the skin maybe slippery when wet). Most supermarkets and stores that sell sports goods also sell swimsuits and swimpants for children. Swimsuits should be tight around the legs and waist, if you do not have a swim diaper on the child, so that nothing would get out of the suit in case of an poopoo accident.

It is not obligatory to use a swim diaper. A dry diaper may float and wet one drag the child down. There are also studies that show that swim diapers don't hold so well that it would make a difference.

### **IS IT POSSIBLE TO JOIN BABY SWIMMING IF THE CHILD OR THE PARENT HAS SPECIAL NEEDS?**

If the child has special needs or is prematurely born you will need a written permission to join baby swimming by the doctor taking care of the child. It is also recommended to inform the instructors if the parents have an illness or something else that might be relevant during the session, for example diminished hearing.

### **SHOULD THE PARENT OR THE CHILD KNOW ANY METHODS BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN BABY OR FAMILY SWIMMING?**

No. Our instructors are there to teach both the child and the adult to function in the water so that the child will become a friend of the water and the swimming will become a fun playtime for the whole family.



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**NOTES:**