

Are chemicals in swimming pool water harmful to my baby?

The chemicals used to treat the pool can produce by-products, such as chloramines, etc, that are not healthy for a baby's delicate lungs and are also somewhat harsh for a baby's delicate skin and may irritate the skin and eyes of some babies. Your health visitor can advise you on skincare products for your baby.

Aqua babes

Aqua babes classes are held at all three of our pools. The classes give your baby water confidence with songs and games.

For more information about swimming, please contact

The Heights Leisure Centre, Sandown

(☎ 01983-405594)

Medina Leisure Centre, Newport

(☎ 01983-523767)

Waterside Pool, Ryde

(☎ 01983-563656)

or visit leisure.iwight.com to find out about all Isle of Wight Council leisure facilities

Pool admission guidelines

A responsible adult aged at least 16 years or over, should accompany all children under the age of eight into the pool and maintain a constant watch over the children they are responsible for. You must stay in the water with the children at all times and keep close contact with those children who are weak or non-swimmers.

These are the adult to child ratios for The Heights, Medina and Waterside pools :

Pool	Main pool	Small pool (designated non-swimming area)
Heights	One adult can be responsible for : Two children aged four to seven years or One child under four years	One adult can be responsible for : Three children aged four to seven years, or Two children under eight, where one or more may be under four years old
Medina Leisure Centre		
Waterside Pool		N/A

Please note that these ratios are dependant on all non-swimming children wearing armbands or other buoyancy aids. We recommend that these armbands or buoyancy aids are approved to British or European standards.

Taking your baby swimming



Advice for parents and carers



What's the best age?

It makes sense to introduce children to swimming at as early an age as possible.

It's a great experience for babies who aren't strong or old enough to walk or crawl. With the support of armbands or floats and the water they get a freedom to move around and kick that they don't get any other way at this stage in their lives.

But at what age is it safe and appropriate for a baby to be taken swimming in a public pool?

The Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM) advises that you can take a child of six months swimming providing the conditions are right. However, it is unwise to take babies swimming much before this age as they become chilled very easily.

Before your baby is six months old, many preliminary swimming activities can be taught to a baby in your bath at home. Splash their body gently with water or move them gently through the water on his back.

The immunisation programme given to babies does not affect their opportunity to go swimming. The advice to wait until the baby has had some or all of their immunisations goes back to the days when polio was much more common and people were worried about it spreading in swimming pools. Polio is now an extremely rare infection and hardly ever seen in the UK. Live polio vaccine drops are no longer given and there is no longer a concern that swimmers will come into contact with the virus from recently immunised babies.

Good points to remember when babies start swimming

- Build up the time you and your baby spend in the pool, starting with perhaps no more than ten to 15 minutes for the first few visits. Shower your baby down immediately after leaving the pool to rinse off any chemicals which could irritate the skin.
- Wait an hour after your baby's feed before going swimming
- If you have a sensitive or nervous baby hold him close to you and wrap him tightly in your arms. Babies use every instinct to pick up signals from you on what is safe or unsafe - so show him this is very safe and lots of fun. Keep your body relaxed. Use lots of eye contact, smile a lot and talk to him using soothing sounds
- Babies should not go swimming if they're ill. A child who is ill should not be exposed to big swings in temperatures
- The temperature of the pool, changing rooms and outside are really important as babies cannot control their body temperature. Pool water should be at least 30°C. Ask the leisure centre staff if you're unsure about the water temperature.
- If your baby has a tummy bug, it is important to wait for two days after the first solid movement before going swimming
- Babies with ear infections should not swim
- Don't go swimming with your baby if they have an infectious disease, including diarrhoea or a heavy cold. Wait for ten days after the illness has cleared before going swimming

- Babies sometimes experience side-effects after their vaccinations. These are usually quite mild and shouldn't prevent you taking your baby swimming. Babies who are feverish or who get a mild form of mumps in the weeks after the MMR vaccine, may not feel up to swimming anyway.

What should my baby wear for swimming?

Babies should wear an elasticised type of swimming costume that will help to contain solid faeces in the event of accidental soiling. It is more hygienic to put your baby into a 'swim nappy' such as Kooshies, Aquanappies or Huggies. Swim nappies are on sale at all our pools. Ask at reception for details.

Please remember that stomach and bowel upsets can be passed on to other users if a pool has been contaminated by an accidental faecal soiling. You may find the following advice helpful :

- Check your baby's nappy frequently and take older children for frequent trips to the toilet
- Do not change nappies by the side of the pool – all our changing rooms are fully equipped with safe and hygienic baby changing facilities, including disposal points for soiled nappies
- Don't rinse your hands in the pool water after a trip to the toilet or after changing a nappy. Please wash your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap
- Although it may be embarrassing for you if your baby does have an accidental soiling while in the pool, there is little that can be done other than removing the material.
- ***Please make sure you tell one of our staff on duty what has happened.***