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TODDLER SAFETY

Mother & Baby
No1 pregnancy & baby mag

Keep your baby safe in the water this summer with our cry-free guide to wet play

Make a splash!

Summer's here, which means there'll often be water nearby – and you can bet your baby will want to get in on the action. But however much fun the paddling pool brings, you need to take care. Here are our tips for keeping your toddler safe.

In the paddling pool

You may be in your back garden but you still need to be extra vigilant when the paddling pool is out. 'It only takes 5cm of water for a baby to drown,' warns Paul Thompson, director of Water Babies and a Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) swimming tutor. The bottom of the pool may be slippery, so hold your baby's hand as she climbs in and out. And while she's in the pool, Paul recommends you check on what she's doing every 10 to 15 seconds. Once she's finished playing, empty the pool to stop her getting back in without you knowing.

At the swimming pool

Although most public pools have a lifeguard, not all do. 'Don't get complacent and never leave your child out of arm's reach in the pool,' says Paul. 'The best way to keep your baby safe in water is by teaching her to swim from a young age,' he says. 'Your baby's never too young for baby swimming classes, although most parents start taking theirs from between six weeks to three months.' If you prefer the extra

assurance of putting your baby in armbands or a floatation jacket, go ahead. 'Although we don't use them in our classes, armbands can be used on babies from a year old and float jackets from 18 months,' says Paul, 'although this does vary depending on the size of your child.'

Around the garden pond

Until your little one can understand the dangers of water, she'll be fascinated by fish and frogs in ponds. If you have a pond, make sure it's covered with a rigid mesh or grille to stop inquisitive toddlers falling in. Also check she can't get into a neighbour's garden, especially if they have a pond or pool that isn't covered.

On the beach

No childhood would be complete without the obligatory trip to the

seaside. When you take your child for a paddle, make sure you're within the red and yellow flags set by the lifeguards on the beach, as this is the safest spot for swimming. 'Stay where it's very shallow, away from where the waves are breaking,' says Paul. 'It goes without saying that you must keep hold of your child.' And don't forget to slap on the sunscreen (minimum SPF40), too.

An M&B reader says...

'Hollie's been having swimming lessons since she was 11 months old as I want her to be confident in and around water,' says Maureen Rapley, mum to Hollie, two. 'The classes also include learning how to cope with unexpected accidents, so if she fell into water she'd know how to turn on her back, swim to the side and climb out. She's very confident in the water now and loves it.' ■

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR BABY DOES FALL IN

HERE ARE PAUL'S TOP TIPS FOR RESCUING A CHILD FROM WATER

- Act quickly – you need to get her out of the water. Make sure you slide in safely, especially if you can't see what's under the surface.
- Calmly swim to your child (you don't want to panic her), keeping your eyes on her. Gently turn her on her back and tow her to the side.

- Always seek out medical help and have her checked over, even if you think she seems to be OK. You don't know how much water she may have swallowed.
- For more information about safety in water and to find out about baby swimming classes in your area, visit waterbabies.co.uk or call 01404 548348. For specialist safety swimwear visit splashabout.net.