



## Home development program

### OVERVIEW

The object of this program is to instruct young parents in what to do with their new born baby in order to prepare the baby for the development of their Personal Aquatic Survival Skills (PASS).

Babies spend the first 40 weeks of their lives immersed in a fluid so they are very familiar with a liquid environment and the effects it has on the body. For all intents and purposes they have been floating for 40 weeks, and any experienced swimming teacher will tell you that getting a child to trust the water and float on top of it is normally the first big challenge both pupil and teacher face.

Babies already have this skill. The challenge is to make sure the baby, after they are born continues to develop this skill.

Of course the biggest difference to being in the uterus and out in the world is the baby now has to breath oxygen to live as opposed to receiving the oxygen through the umbilical chord and this changes the whole dynamics of how they adapt to the water environment the encounter in the world outside the womb.

### AIMS

The aims of the (PASS) home development programs are as follows:

1. Make bath time fun
2. Maintain the babies ability to float in water and
3. Develop the babies breath control

#### 1. Make bath time fun

First and foremost bath time needs to be fun, an enjoyable experience. So the golden rule should be avoided any activities where the baby starts to get stressed. Spend time at the beginning on the bath time to play with the baby and make them feel comfortable and relaxed. The water should be warm, around body temperature.

#### 2. Maintain the babies' ability to float in water.

Because the baby can not put their face in the water this activity need to be carried out while the baby is lying on their back.

Place one hand under the back of the babies head and shoulders and the other hand under their bottom and gently lower the baby (face up) into the water. The aim is to lower the baby until the water touches the corner of their eyes and mouth. Their ears will be completely covered by the water.

Once the water gets to the corner of their eyes and mouth you should feel the baby become weightless. Please do not attempt to let the baby float by themselves at this stage. Always support the baby with your hands. If at any stage during the lowering process the baby starts to get upset raise them back up out of the water, kiss and cuddle them and then repeat the lowering process. Spend about two to three minutes on this activity. Remember **DO NOT TRY TO FORCE THE BABY PAST THE POINT WHERE THEY ARE COMFORTABLE.**

You are now reminding your baby that the water is an environment where they are weightless. Most babies are relaxed with this activity.

### 3. Develop the babies breath control

Now that the baby has to rely on oxygen they breath as opposed to sharing the mothers oxygen supply, they have to learn to hold their breath when the nose and mouth are covered with water.

An effective way to help the baby know when this is going to happen is to develop a **TRIGGER COMMAND**. This is simply a word or phrase that lets the baby know water is going to be around their nose, mouth, eyes and ears.

This is what you do. Hold the baby securely so their shoulders are low in the water and they are facing down. Wet the babies head with your hand so that what hair they may have is totally saturated. Use a small plastic cup, and place a small amount of water in the bottom of the cup. Call the baby by name and the use the trigger command and at the end of the trigger command pour the water in the cup over the top of the babies head so that small amounts of water runs over the babies eyes, nose and mouth.

So the process goes like this:

- a. Wet the hair
- b. Call the baby by name (James)
- c. Use the trigger command "1-2-3-under"
- d. As soon as you say "under"
- e. Pour the water over the head.

Repeat this process several times. As the baby gets used to the trigger command and the water going over their head, you can increase the amount of water in the cup. Over a period of time you can build up to a full cup over the babies head which means the baby will now have to hold their breath for a slow count of one-two-three (about three seconds).

In this activity you are teaching you baby two things. A trigger command and how to hold their breath.

## WHATS NEXT?

The same old routine I'm afraid except now baby is big enough to go into the shower but the following still apply except for a small modification of being able to use the shower as a source of water.

1. Make bath/shower time fun
2. Maintain the babies ability to float in water and
3. Develop the babies breath control

You will still have to use the bath for "Maintain the babies ability to float in water" as you need a fixed body of water in which to maintain this skill, however for the other two the shower can become a great learning ground.

Of course you still have to make it fun and give the baby lots of encouragement, kisses, cuddles and laughter to set the mood.

The shower is a great tool for really developing the babies breath control. Hold the baby facing you to your chest with the shower rose pouring water over your back. Use the same trigger command "1-2-3-under" and as you say under turn around and let the water run over the babies head so that a stream goes over the babies eyes, nose, mouth and ears.

Once again employ the slow count. The aim is to teach the baby to hold their breath for a slow count of five. Practice with a time piece so you get used to counting off five seconds. You will be surprised how long this feels especially if you are a first time parent.

If you do not have a shower then you can use a one liter container to pour water over the babies head while they are in the bath.

It does not matter if it is the shower or bath, the thing that matters is you teach the baby how to hold their breath.

## SUMMARY

Your aim is to ensure your baby does not loose the skills they are born with in relation to surviving in a water environment.

The skill you need to maintain is their floating skill and the new skill you need to teach them is how to hold their breath.

Make it fun and NEVER FORCE YOUR BABY TO DO A SKILL THEY ARE NOT HAPPY WITH. Back off and then gradually build back up to the point where the baby was not happy and then work through that point.

Have fun with your baby in the water.

Chris Shapland