



## Splish Splash: Water and Bathtime Fun

Playing with water offers endless opportunities for discovery and fun as your child uses all her senses to explore this incredible substance. And all that squeezing, squirting and pouring helps strengthen muscles and build coordination. Whether it is in the bathtub or in a bucket, give your child plenty of opportunities to learn what water is like and what she can do with it.

**NOTE: Be aware at all times that young children can drown in less than an inch of water. Never leave children alone while they are playing with water.**

- Babies usually like being in water and find the experience familiar and soothing. Make your baby's bathtime relaxing by talking to her. Use water-related words tell her how her kicking makes the water *splash* or that you are squeezing the water from the washcloth so it doesn't *drip* on her face.
- When your child can sit up in the tub, pour water on parts of his body and name them as you pour. As your child gets older, have him pour water where you ask him to: *Can you pour water on your belly?* or *How can you pour water on your back?* Use different-size containers for pouring or a colander to make it "rain" on your child instead.
- Add a variety of objects to the tub or wading pool to encourage your child's investigation of the properties of water. Bowls, buckets, small plastic cups, measuring spoons and cups, corks, aquarium nets, scoops, plastic tubes, funnels, plastic squeeze bottles, sponges, strainers, wire whisks, and so on are things he can use again and again for splashing, pouring, drizzling, stirring, spraying, scooping, and dripping.
- Water can do amazing things when you add items, such as soap or flour. Let your toddler help with tasks such as "washing" plastic dishes or pouring and mixing ingredients for play dough or dumplings. Give him a dishpan and a sponge or washcloth and a small amount of water and detergent so he can wash his own toys.

- Bubbles and water go hand in hand, especially in the tub! Add bubble bath and let your older toddler have fun shaping the bubbles into all sorts of things. She can make bubble hair, bubble beards, and bubble clothes on her body, make bubble sculptures, or draw with bubbles on the tub walls.
- Some things float in water and some things sink. Your child will notice this and want to test many objects. Encourage her to predict whether an item will float or sink and then test her prediction by trying it. Long before she can understand a scientific explanation, she will have good ideas about what floats and what sinks—and why. Talk with her about her ideas and about what new things she would like to test.
- In the city or in the country, explore creeks, ponds, lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water with your child. See what happens when you drop rocks, leaves, or sticks in. Show your child how to be safe when playing around water.
- Outdoor play with water can be purposeful (using a hose to wash the car or a watering can to water plants) or unstructured (watching water from the hose run downhill, filling and dumping buckets, or running through a sprinkler).
- Toddlers love to stomp through puddles, pour water into sand or mud, “paint” with water and then watch it disappear, and play in snow or gentle rain. Take time to talk with your child about what he is doing and what happens as a result.
- Check with your local Y or community center about taking swimming classes together.