

About diving

The infant swimming reflex is taken advantage of when diving. This reflex closes the airways so that water does not enter the throat. The diving practise is always started by pouring water over the baby with a jug in order to see how the child reacts to water flowing over their face. When the child accepts the water on their face and does not react to it too strongly, the first submerged dive can be considered.

In infant diving verbal and physical cues are always used before putting water on the face. The cue tells the baby when the dive begins. Between dives there is always a break, so that the baby has time to recover. Diving cannot be done if the baby is crying or has hiccups or a blocked nose, because they prevent the reflex from working properly. The baby can dive as many times as they have months of age (a baby of 5 months can dive 5 times).

Diving is just on part of infant swimming lessons and swimming can be done without diving as well. In the pool, one can, for example, play, jump, play with balls, imitate, float, take photos, climb, sing, gain independent skills and get to know people.

Problematic situations

Crying. Crying is a message. If the baby cries when coming to swim, something is scaring or disturbing them. A crying baby should not be brought to swim forcefully, but the situation should be studied and the reason for the crying removed. After the swim the things that normally make the baby cry are being cold, tiredness or hunger.

"Bad day". Babies and parents alike have days when nothing seems to go right. (Depending on the situation) one should still come to swim even if it was just to enjoy the water without trying too much. If the baby feels upset during the swim, do not let them cry loudly for a long time as this is easily transferred to other babies.

Sate of health. All infectious diseases and infections prevent swimming: respiratory infections, ear infections, eye infection, skin infections with pus, diarrheal, vomiting, urinary infections... You can come to swim again when you are healthy and, if needed, after a doctor's check-up.

Please remember that viruses are very infectious during the appearance of the first symptoms! If there have been any health concerns during the pregnancy, birth or in the baby's health before starting the swimming lessons, we recommend consulting with a doctor before starting.

Atopic skin. If the child has dry skin, lotion should be applied generously on the day before swimming and again after the swim, when the skin is still damp

Infant and toddler swimming lessons in Riihimäki

The sport services of Riihimäki offer infant swimming lessons and toddler swimming lessons for 1 to 3-year olds at the Riihimäki swimming hall's private sauna. You can find information about the content, price and participation requirements from: www.riihimaki.fi/palvelut/kulttuuri-ja-vapaa-aika/liikunta/ohjattu-liikunta/vauvauinti/ and from a leaflet at the swimming hall's reception. You are warmly welcome!

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Background of infant swimming lessons

The swimming education for small children started in the United States in the 1940's and arrived in Finland at the start of the 1980's. Currently, there are several schools worldwide in which infant swimming lessons are done differently depending on the culture and the environment. For example, in France the approach is very psychological, and there is usually little games or direct instructions. In Australia and the USA, the special focus is on preventing drowning. In Japan, the infant swimming lessons' teaching methods are school-like and big groups of children are taught e.g. numbers and colours alongside swimming.

The special features of the Finnish infant swimming lessons are high level of hygiene, the variation between instructions and free swimming, family and baby-oriented instructions and centralized training for the instructors. Infant swimming lessons can be directed by a person who has graduated from SUH's or Folkheläsan's swimming instructor's course and family and infant swimming lesson course. Infant swimming is one of SUH's four main sectors: the others are swimming schools, lifesaving and special needs-swimming

INFANT SWIMMING LESSONS



Kotikaupunki
RIIHIMÄKI
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Infant swimming lesson is the baby's journey of discovery to an underwater world. The baby is coached to move, explore, play, use their imagination and develop while swimming by using interesting toys and tool as well as the example of the parents and other children. The infant swimming lessons are the whole family's shared hobby.

Infant swimming lessons

The infant swimming lesson is the baby's and parents' shared play moment in the warmed water, supervised by a trainer instructor. The earliest starting age at Riihimäki is at 4 months, when the time the baby is awake is long enough and they have the energy to move in the water. The child should weigh at least 5kg, so they can stay warm in the +32°C water.

Water is an ideal element for the baby

Water is a very different environment in comparison with the baby's everyday surroundings, so it offers new sensory experiences in a new environment, which are important for the development. The water shows, sounds, tastes and can be felt as different temperatures and movements on the skin. On the other hand, the water is familiar and safe from the mother's belly. Being weightless helps the baby to move and maintain different positions which they cannot yet do on the ground. Water also resists movement and develops muscle strength, supports movements and makes uncontrolled movements calm and develops balance. The water also supports hands and toys at the baby's eyelevel, which helps to develop the eye-hand coordination.

Goals of the infant swimming lessons

- a happy play moment for the family
- makes the child enjoy being in the water
- contributes to learning to swim (later)
- increases water safety
- creates social interaction between the families

Getting ready for the infant swimming lesson

- Get to know infant swimming lessons through different sources
- Discuss the infant swimming lessons at the family clinic and during a doctor's check-up
- Try to overcome the fear of water, if you are afraid yourself. The fear is mirrored in the child.
- Familiarize the baby to the infant swimming lesson time already at home
- Lower the water temperature slowly to +32 degrees so that the water does not feel too cold for the baby during the first swims
- If there has been something out of ordinary during the pregnancy or birth (e.g. preemie), we recommend you get a permit to participate from your doctor
- The baby should have a swim trunks/suit with tight legs. You do not put a diaper under the swimsuit

Instructions for bathing at home

- Do not bathe a tired or hungry baby
- Bathe the child at home at the time your lesson would start
- Put a lot of water in the tub
- Lower the water temperature slowly from +37 degrees to +32 degrees
- Both parents should participate the bathing at home
- Bathe the baby playing with them and talk to them with different tones of voice
- Change the baby's position often, have the whole body in the water in all positions (on their back, on the belly, on the side). Hold the ears in the water.
- Do not keep the child too long on their back because they cannot hear the bather's voice and might be spooked by the sounds under water
- Start wetting the head by lifting some water on the back of the head by hand. Increase the amount of water if the baby enjoys this. Do not splash water on the face when the baby is facing upwards
- Stop the bath if the baby gets tired or starts to cry
- Dry, lotion and dress the baby in warm clothes after the bath

First times swimming

During the first time the child is familiarized with the pool environment and the water. The parents are taught different holds in the water. During the swim the child should be talked to in a calm voice and eye and skin contact maintained. To prevent getting cold, the child should move as much as possible in the water.

The first swimming lesson only lasts 10-15 minutes. You should leave when still feeling good and before the baby gets cold, hungry or tired. During the next lesson the swimming time is increased to 30 minutes, taking into the account the capacities.

When the baby is used to the different basic holds, they can be handled with a bit more vigour and games' speed can be increased. However, each baby is an individual and develops at their own pace. This means that the development of swimming should also not be compared with other babies. The infant baby lessons always progress on the child's terms! The aim is not to mould the baby into a super swimmer, but to find a hobby for the whole family a make the water a friend.

Preparing for the swim

- Reserve enough time for the lessons.
- Make sure that your child's basic needs (sleep, feeding) have been met so that they enjoy being in the water.
- Only healthy people swim (meaning babies and adults alike).
- Do not lotion your child in the morning, because the lotion dissolves in the water making it dirty.
- Do not use deodorant or other perfumes in the morning.
- Take off jewellery and watches because they gather dirt. Remove any make-up.
- Wash with soap without swimwear. For small babies washing their bottom with water is enough in order to conserve heat.
- Comb and wash (at least rinse) your hair. Tie up long hair.
- Go to sauna to sit and warm up only after swimming and with a seat cover. Do not take your swimwear to the sauna because the chlorine that stays in the fabric is toxic when it heats up and evaporates.
- Wash also the swimwear with soap after swimming.