

Temperature and other guidelines for Newborn to Preschool

Teacher specific Guidelines

Teachers of Newborn, Babies, Toddlers or Preschoolers should:

- hold an appropriate qualification as recognised by ASCTA such as the Swim Australia™ Teacher of Babies and Toddlers accreditation. This recognises specific training in Newborn, Baby, Toddlers and Preschooler aquatics and a sound understanding of the aquatic implications of early childhood development
- continue their education and professional development to stay current with new trends
- hold a current certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and be competent in the recovery and resuscitation of Newborn, Babies, Toddlers or Preschoolers and their Caregivers
- respect and nurture the bond between Caregiver (especially the Parents) and Child
- directly model to Caregivers, positive behaviour management strategies
- educate Caregivers on the need to respect their Child's individuality and not to make comparisons with other Children
- educate Caregivers on the developmental implications of a Newborn, Babies, Toddlers and Preschoolers aquatics program
- understand and communicate the importance of play in the education of the developing Child
- understand that a primary role of the Teacher is to monitor and guide the education of the Child through the Caregiver
- display an understanding, aptitude, patience and enthusiasm for interaction with Newborn, Babies, Toddlers or Preschoolers
- where it can reasonably be expected; recognise when a Child is unwell, and be familiar with the common symptoms of contagious diseases that may put the Child or others at risk. Teachers must not attempt to diagnose the condition but rather recommend the Parent seeks professional medical advice

Clothing Guidelines

Appropriate clothing should be worn by Newborn, Babies, Toddlers or Preschoolers, Caregivers and Teachers.

- Newborns, Babies and non toilet trained Toddlers should wear non - padded pants that fit snugly around the legs to ensure that bowel motions do not enter the pool. It is essential that Caregivers and Teachers can quickly see that a bowel motion has occurred
- During the summer months, Caregivers should be advised to provide protection for their Child's feet against hot surfaces such as outdoor pathways and metal surfaces. Appropriate sun protection as per the Sun Smart polices should be followed such as using SPF 30+ sunscreen, protective clothing, hats and utilising available shaded areas
- During the cooler months, Caregivers should be advised to dry their Child, change them into warm dry clothing and encourage Children to wear head coverings when leaving the facility

Teachers and Caregivers should remove jewellery especially neck adornments which may be grasped by the Child and should wear secure swimming apparel appropriate to the lesson.

Safety procedures and pool guidelines

- Any Child having a bowel movement should leave the water immediately, be washed with soap and changed into clean clothing before re-entering the pool. Soiled clothing should be quickly and carefully cleaned and placed in a sealed container for disposal or sanitising
- Pool and associated facilities should meet or exceed standards specified by the relevant State and Local authorities regarding safety, water purity and sanitary conditions
- Teachers should have a working knowledge of the facilities emergency evacuation procedure and ensure participants in their program are fully aware of these procedures
- Caregivers should be educated about the safety aspects of all equipment used within the program
- Floors and passageways must be free from obstructions and have appropriate wet-area flooring
- Dressing rooms and changing tables should be well maintained, sanitised regularly and have supporting materials provided such as soap and disposal bins
- Special attention must be given to the placement of equipment such as mats and kickboards to avoid the risk of patrons slipping
- Teachers should be aware that pregnant Mothers or Caregivers carrying young Children may have restricted vision and be more unsteady on their feet. Be particularly vigilant with trip hazards and uneven surfaces, steps or changes in pool depth
- Teachers should be aware of the safety and comfort implications of varying water depths for Caregivers during activities

The care and storage of toys and equipment.

- All toys and equipment should meet the Australian Toy Standard (AS/NZ 8124)
- Special care should be taken that toys and equipment will not fit into a Child's mouth nor contain any small removable parts that could cause choking
- Toys and equipment are to be maintained in a safe working condition at all times
- All toys and equipment are to be made from non toxic materials
- A regular cleaning schedule should be in place to thoroughly disinfect toys. Extra care should be taken in disinfecting the inside of all hollow toys
- Children must be within arms reach of the Teacher or Caregiver and in their view at all times, particularly around large equipment such as mats and platforms

The use of attached or worn Teaching Aids

- Teachers must be aware that the use of aids may assist with the gaining of confidence and skills but can mask the Child's true aquatic ability
- Aids should only be used in controlled teaching situations
- Flotation aids worn on or attached to the body are not life saving devices and must only be used under competent Adult supervision
- Such flotation aids must be acceptable to the Australian Standard 'Flotation Aids for Water Familiarisation and Swimming Tuition'; Australian Standard AS 1900-2002
- Aids must be checked prior to use to ensure correct fit and usage is achieved
- Children can quickly become dependant on aids leading to a false and potentially dangerous sense of their swimming ability without aids
- Overuse of aids may decrease the Child's ability to perform previously learnt skills without an aid

Water temperature and class duration

- The water temperature should be between 30 to 33 degrees Celsius. This provides for optimal learning comfort and enjoyment
- Newborn, Babies and Toddlers become cold very quickly. Caregivers should wrap their Newborn, Babies and Toddlers in a towel when out of the water. The learning of aquatic skills should never take precedence over the Child's comfort
- Children who display signs of lost body heat should be immediately removed from the water, dried, clothed and kept warm
- In-water class times should not exceed thirty (30) minutes for Babies and Toddlers (Newborn should not be in formal classes)
- Frequent, short learning experiences are best as Newborn, Babies and Toddlers need to avoid becoming cold and tired
- Teachers must be aware of the risks associated with pregnant Women overheating in water temperatures higher than 34 degrees

Caregiver involvement and education

- Aquatic education programs must involve the education of the Caregivers
- Caregivers should be in the water as an active class participant
- The Caregiver is the primary educator of the young Child and must assume responsibility for the supervision and aquatic education of the Child
- Programs should communicate safety rules, goals, techniques and expectations of Newborn, Baby and Toddler aquatic education activities
- All Children must be fully supervised including Siblings who may be waiting while their usual Caregiver is in class with a younger or older Sibling. Caregivers must be made aware that their “in the water” Child needs their full attention and that they cannot supervise other Siblings adequately whilst participating in a class

Health whilst in aquatic programs

It is vital the Child, Caregiver and Teacher are in good health whilst undertaking activities in an aquatic environment where close contact, warm water an effective medium to convey infection exists

- The Caregiver should ensure that they and the Child are in good health prior to participating in aquatic programs
- Pertinent health information about pre-existing conditions should be obtained from the Caregivers before a Child is accepted into an aquatic program. Teachers and Caregivers need to be aware that physical and emotional health varies, from time to time, in each individual. Medical and personal information should be stored, released and disposed of as per the Federal Government privacy principles
- Pre-existing medical and health conditions of Caregivers that may effect their in-water participation must also be collected prior to commencement within a program
- Teachers must ensure Caregivers understand the importance of regularly updating any changes to the health status of the Child or their self.

Further aquatic readiness considerations

- Readiness for each stage of aquatic activity will be determined by both the maturity of the Child and previous aquatic experiences
- The number of participants in a class should allow for close supervision and individual attention
- Programs should include movement, exploration, games and provide Caregivers participation in various developmentally appropriate activities
- Development of specific skills in aquatics should not take precedence over a Child's enjoyment of the water, but should be seen in relation to their overall development
- The first key to learning is the emphasis placed on a positive, safer and more enjoyable aquatic environment

Guidelines specific to each age grouping

In the following sections, the stages of development and growth and the impact this has for the Caregiver and Teacher of Babies and Toddlers are detailed.

An understanding by Teachers will allow them to better judge the potential mental and physical capabilities of specific Children participating in their aquatic programs.

Participation in formal Aquatic Programs

- From about 3-4 months of age, Newborn begin to gain control over their posture and under normal circumstances they can raise their head and look about
- Newborn about 3-4 months of age are able to engage in social interactions and are becoming very aware of their environment
- The involuntary reflexes are now rapidly becoming integrated into voluntary movement patterns and Newborn are gaining control of posture and movement

Support for Babies aged four to eight months

- Aquatic activity is very much a sensory experience in the early stages. Teachers must have a sound understanding of reflexes and be proficient at reading the Babies' non verbal cues
- Caregivers need to be taught appropriate holds that provide adequate support for the Baby
- The aquatic environment can cause a Baby to become unstable. They may not have the ability to lift their head and breathe independently when in the water
- Teachers must understand how reflexes relate to breath control and their implications to the submersion of Babies
- Unsupported back floating is not recommended for Newborn and Babies under eight months of age. The buoyancy of a Newborn or Baby enables them to float with minimal support of the head and neck. However this is not a voluntary skill and the Newborn or young Baby is unable to adjust and make changes to their position. Independent back floating places a Newborn or young Baby at higher risk of swallowing water, developing hyponatremia, and becoming emotionally traumatised

Progressive Skill Development for young Children

- Head, arm and leg proportions mean a Newborn or young Baby is still top heavy and may balance, streamline and propel differently to a Preschooler or older Child
- The learning of skills by the Child is directly related to active participation in educational programs and to the frequency of practice. Prolonged absence from an activity will often result in significant regression of skills
- Only when a Newborn, Baby or Toddler can demonstrate a learnt response to a cue for breath control can submersions be initiated. Initially submersions should be brief and few in number. Once the young Child can consistently initiate submersions and demonstrate competent breath control, submersions can become longer and more frequent. The emphasis in these experiences should be free of force
- Teachers must have an adequate understanding of the righting (rolling over) and postural reflexes and their implications on teaching Newborn, Babies and Toddlers to back float
- Activities should be modified to cater for the young Child's increased mobility, independence, and growing understanding of their world around them
- ASCTA recognises the desire of individuals and agencies to use an aquatic environment as a method of enriching the life experience of young Children. The emphasis in these experiences should be free of force, punishment or threat

Appropriate Activities

- Programs that include movement exploration, water adjustment, fun, games and Caregiver/Child involvement are appropriate
- Development of specific skills in aquatics should not take precedence over the young Child's general well-being, but should be seen in relation to overall development
- Consideration should be given to the developing Child's intensely curious behaviour, propensity to make believe and the development of vivid fears
- Trust is a cornerstone of the relationships that build between Teachers, Caregivers and Children. Without trust, anxiety and fear are more likely to compromise the enjoyment of all activities. Enjoyment is an integral part of insuring activities are suited to the age and ability of each group

Parent Education

- The aquatic program may be the young Child's first formal educational experience
- Teachers of Babies and Toddlers should be capable of offering emotional support to Caregivers in their program and creating a nurturing, positive environment
- It is essential that Caregivers understand the rationale for any formal aquatic program for their Child
- Programs need to cater for varying levels of mobility and Caregivers must be educated about the safety implications of this increased mobility
- Teachers of Babies and Toddlers must have an adequate understanding of, and be capable of educating Caregivers on the implications of separation anxiety

Outdoors Lessons

Teachers of Babies and Toddlers conducting programs in outdoor facilities should consider the following:

- Structure the class activities and duration in consideration of water and air temperature
- The air temperature and often the water temperature within outdoor venues cannot be controlled. Lessons held in cooler climates should be scheduled to maximise the benefits of the warmest part of the day
- Lessons held in warmer climates should be scheduled towards a cooler time of the day
- Children should be kept active within the water and not left sitting on the edge where cooler air temperature may cause rapid loss of body heat
- The positioning of the sun must be taken into account, especially when back floating