

03

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER



Royal Life Saving
ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY - AUSTRALIA



FACT SHEET No.03

Water Awareness



Q. What is water awareness?

A. Water awareness is a term which covers a range of strategies which can help ensure your child's safety when in, on, or around water. This includes water familiarisation, checking for and removing water hazards (e.g. buckets), setting rules around water and discussing water safety with your child.

Q. What is water familiarisation?

A. Water familiarisation classes are generally held at public swimming pools and aquatic centres and provide an opportunity for parents and carers to get their child involved in the development of aquatic skills and water confidence, while increasing social, emotional, mental and physical skills in a safe environment.

Q. What is the difference between water awareness and learn to swim?

A. Water awareness classes, such as Royal Life Saving's Swim and Survive Wonder Program focus on the gradual introduction of very basic skills, such as moving in the water, getting the face wet and blowing bubbles for children aged 6 to 36 months. The Courage program is aimed at children aged 3 to 5 years and teaches water confidence. Learn to swim classes are suitable for children 5 years and over and focus on developing the basic skills taught in water awareness classes and turning them into recognisable strokes and the confidence to swim without being held by an adult or carer.

Q. What else can I do to be water aware?

A. You can use bath time as a time for water awareness, letting your baby or child feel, experience and play with water. You can also put rules in place for children when they go near water and ensure that parents and adults uphold these rules themselves to set a good example. When visiting new aquatic locations you can examine these together with your child and discuss any safety issues and rules for that location with your child.

Q. What should I expect from a water awareness class?

A. Generally, a water awareness class will involve a small number of parents/carers with their child participating with an instructor who facilitates learning through fun games, songs and activities. There is also a focus on providing key water safety messages to parents and carers. Typical skills taught to children include: entering and exiting the water safely with a carer, being gently rocked and being encouraged to splash and kick their legs.

Q. Can I practice these skills at home?

A. Yes, you can also play in the home pool with your child or use bath time to help them become familiar with water. Bath time is especially good as you can familiarise children with water almost from birth. Use a baby bath big enough to allow movement. Hold the baby underneath their head and move them forwards and backwards, allowing them to feel the movement of the water.

ROYAL LIFE SAVING HAS DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF
FACT SHEETS ON WATER SAFETY ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA.

Contact Royal Life Saving on: **1300 737 763**
or download them from: **www.keepwatch.com.au**

Water Awareness Checklist:

- Bath time used as a time for water awareness
- Rules in place for children when they go near water
- New aquatic locations examined with children
- Hazards and risks at new locations discussed and rules set
- Parents at picnics and parties have a designated child supervisor near water actively supervising
- Parents at picnics and parties near water upholding rules
- Visited local pool or called Royal Life Saving to find out how to participate in water familiarisation classes

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