



# Bath Time & Your Baby:

*Loving and learning while getting clean*

## 6-12 Months

Bath time is about so much more than cleaning up after a messy day in the trenches. For your baby, the bathtub is her personal water park, and a great opportunity for you to connect with her and teach her all sorts of important skills. Check this out:

What could be more awesome than being in a giant puddle where I'm center stage and have your full attention? Just you and me and my belly and my nose and my fingers and all my other great body parts that you touch so lovingly and tell me the names of. I can make the water go "splash!" with my hands. Then I drop my toy boat in the water and watch it bob up and down. And when you soap me up, it feels tickly and makes me laugh!

Bubbles make my bath time even more fun. I love to play the game of wiping the bubbles away to discover what part of my body is hiding underneath. When we're done, it feels so good to be snuggled up in a warm towel and hear you tell me how sweet I smell. Hmmm. I'm something special.

Your gentle, loving touch during the bath and cuddle time afterward builds your baby's self-esteem because it makes him feel loved and important. In fact, research shows that touching babies in ways that feel good promotes healthy social-emotional development and enhances their motor skills, too. Your baby also develops his thinking and language skills during bath time.

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## What you can do

## What your child is learning

### Social-Emotional Development

Notice your child's accomplishments: You figured out how to squeeze the water from the sponge!



That she is smart and competent when you delight in her discoveries as you play together.

Play back-and-forth games like taking turns patting the water to make a splash.



The skill of turn-taking as you engage in back-and-forth activities together.

Take time to cuddle after bath time is over.



That she is lovable which builds her self-esteem.

### Language and Thinking Skills

Respond to your baby's sounds and gestures. You are showing me the bath book. Do you want me to read this one to you?



That he is a good communicator. That his sounds and actions are a good way to show you what he is thinking and feeling.

Talk with your baby about what you are doing together during bath time. You dropped the ducky in the water. He floats!



New words and concepts like sinking and floating.

Help your child learn new skills. Show him how to stick sponge letters to the wall of the tub or make the ducky squeak.



How things work by copying what he sees you do.

### Physical Development

Offer your baby lots of different safe toys to explore with his hands.



How to explore in new ways from a seated position—transferring objects from one hand to another and using his hands to make objects work, such as trying to get the bath stickers to stick to the tub.

Point out and talk about your baby's different body parts as he uses them. You used your hands to pop the bubbles! Good job.



To recognize her body parts and how they work to help her reach her goals.



When he makes a big splash with his hands or by dropping a toy in the tub, your baby learns about cause-and-effect. This helps him figure out how things work. When he wipes the bubbles away to discover his belly underneath, he learns that things still exist even though he can't see them—a very important concept. And all the talking you do together during this special time helps build his language skills. What's most important is that all of this learning takes place with you, his most favorite person!

But remember, part of keeping bath time fun is making sure your baby is safe. This means never leaving your baby unattended, even if he is in a baby bath seat. So gather all the things you will need for the bath beforehand and let the phone ring over to voicemail. Also, be sure to set your water heater below 120 degrees to prevent the possibility of scalding.

*For more information about bath safety, go to [AAP.org](http://AAP.org).*



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