



Creating Play Environments: Bathtub Play

Bath time is a wonderful time to play with your child. For children who already love the water it's a great opportunity to increase their experiences with movement, learning and imagination. For children

who are not enthusiastic about bath time, play activities may diminish anxiety especially if they feel "in control" of the activities.



Of course it is essential that the child be safe in the water before s/he will play. There are a number of commercially available tub seats for young children. For older children who require supports, a bath-seat may need to be ordered from a specialty catalog.

Once a child is properly supported let the games begin!!!! Water is a wonderful sensory medium as it "responds" to virtually any movement. For the young child it may be fun to just splash by moving arms and legs in the water. The resistance of the water is a good way to increase muscle strength and the feedback your child will get is a "splash".

Games to Play/Materials to Use

◆ Naming Body Parts is a classic tub game. Use a wash cloth, a bar of soap, a paintbrush or foam soap to wash the body part your child has indicated. You can also put the child in charge of washing as you name the part to be washed -- this can be

a fun turn-taking game. With a paintbrush your child can "paint" the tub and his/her body.

◆ Certain materials encourage water play: sponges for squeezing and wringing with two hands, cups to fill up and dump or two cups to pour water back and forth between them and "mix the water". Turkey basters are great for squeezing, and funnels are also interesting to pour water into and watch come out.

◆ Consider using empty dish liquid bottles or spray bottles to squirt water. Have an older child squirt the water into an empty margarine container floating on the tub surface to "sink the ship", or aim at his/her toes.

◆ Another game, which encourages eyes and hands to work together, is using a fish net or ladle to scoop floating objects (plastic fish, ping-pong balls, etc.) out of the water. Try putting a few ice cubes in the bath water. This will allow the child to experiment with different temperatures and to watch the ice cubes melt.



◆ Using foam soap or shaving cream at bath time can be fun. A child can use both hands to rub it on his/her body the sides of the tub and even up on the walls (surface dependent of course). Try making hand prints or drawing pictures in the shaving cream using a paintbrush or a finger.

◆ Tub blocks, available in most toy stores, are fun in the water. When wet, these toys stick to shiny tub and wall surfaces. A younger child can catch the blocks as they float in the tub or push them down into the water and watch them pop up! Or knock them down with his/her hand, a paintbrush, or a spray bottle. An older child may enjoy creating a picture.

◆ To promote creative play scenarios consider bringing small action figures and/or animals in the tub. By combining the people with the other tub toys a variety of imaginative play scenes can be created (i.e. people on a boat, in a swimming pool or in a flood). Bringing a waterproof doll into the tub and "washing the baby" is also an imaginary play favorite.

◆ Tub time is wonderful for amateur cooks. Consider bringing strainers, spoons, pots and empty spice containers into the tub for a fun cooking experience.

Note...

The experiences described above do not have to be limited to the tub. In nice weather many of these play activities can be done in a small wading pool. If you are really brave you can create an indoor beach: fill up a small pool in the house and put a shower curtain underneath it to protect the floor. Next to the water set-up a large cardboard box filled with dry beans or pasta for the "sand". Many of the water activities can also be done in the "sand".

