

Pool Fun

By Brittany Lewis, Provo Early Intervention Service Coordinator

Whether it's the smell of chlorine or the distinct clap of flip-flops, nothing feels like summer more than a trip to the pool. With sunshine in full swing, we hope your family can take advantage of pool activities (even if that is as simple as a trip to your backyard kiddie pool).

Beth Hardman COTA/L and Devon Gere OTR/L with Easterseals-Goodwill's early intervention services say that time at the pool is a perfect place to work on your toddler's development while having fun.

They combined forces to create ways to splash up your pool time fun with a few engaging activities that promote a range of skills.

Off to the Pool We Go!

The engagement can start before you ever even leave the house with communicating about where the family is going. You can encourage language interactions and cognitive understanding by pointing to objects you will need and naming them. Ask questions and listen for your child's response.

Start the experience with a simple sorting activity. For example, say, 'We are going to the pool. What do we need?' Then sort through items together like goggles, float toys, a towel, sunscreen, etc. Make sure to include things that DO NOT belong at the pool, too, and throw them in a different pile.

When you arrive, this is prime opportunity to name objects, wait for your child to respond, and encourage

social skills as your family takes in the new surroundings and new people.

Splash and Explore

The pool is a great place to work on strength, range of motion/flexibility, balance, coordination and endurance. Plus, with the support of the water, children move more easily and can get that deep pressure sensory input that helps calm and soothe.

- Have your child sit on the steps in the pool or in a kiddie pool to encourage your child's core strength.

This is a simple way to introduce a new environment for our more timid explorers while helping them learn to balance.

- As they become better adjusted to the water, encourage arm movements through the water and even walking with assistance. This resistance promotes strengthening and balance of their bodies.

- If your child has adjusted well at this point, you

can help them do even more big body movements like squatting and jumping. Just remember, children work a lot harder when they are in the water, so you want to increase their fluid intake to prevent dehydration.

- Explore things like pool noodles. Roll them over their body, allowing little hands to grip and squeeze.
- Practice blowing bubbles in the water while taking turns.



Pool Fun (continued)

Game Time

Of course, adventures at the pool often involve fun for children of all ages in your family. Here are a few activities to try with older children and those active toddlers.

- Gripping any pool equipment such as a diving ring, kickboard, or pool noodle will help build hand and arm strength and endurance.
- Throw a ball towards a pool noodle taped into a large ring for hand-eye coordination practice,
- Stack pool noodle pieces on land to begin with, in the pool for more of a challenge
- Squeeze sponges full of water to build hand strength and endurance.
- Have your children play with water shooters. Big ones require both hands to hold on and coordination of movements.

- Beginning with a small squirt gun for ease, aim at a target or squirt balloons across the pool. This can help develop hand-eye coordination.
- Put flippers on hands or feet to increase resistance and build up endurance and strength as they swim around, dive down, etc.

Stay Safe!

Don't forget that while the pool is a great opportunity for exploration and development, it also requires parental attention and safety measures. So as you head out on your adventure, please keep these things in mind:

- Any body of water—even an open toilet, pail or bathtub—requires parental supervision especially if infants and toddlers are present. Don't leave a child unattended even for a second!
- Enforce the rules of the pool such as not running
- Remember floatation devices are not a substitute for supervision
- Don't forget sunscreen for your children's sensitive skin!



**All children activities should occur under parental supervision.