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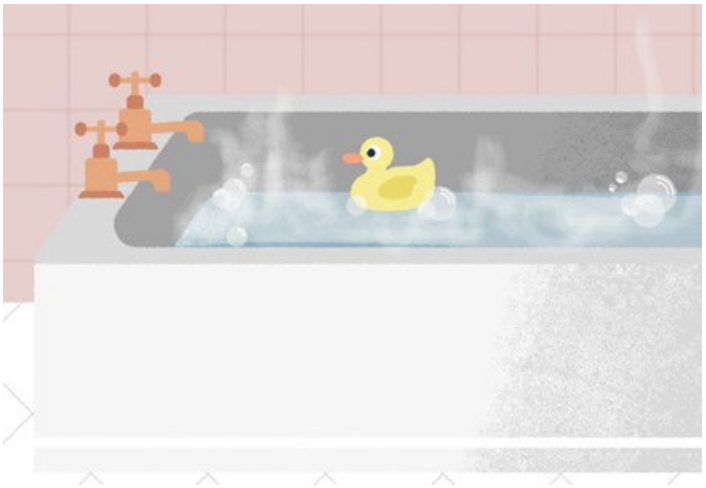
Watch out in water

"This has highlighted the dangers posed when a child is left unsupervised for a short period of time and even in the shallowest of water."

Coroner's report, bath seat drowning of 7-month-old

Drowning happens silently. A drowning child can't speak or control their arms. They slip quietly under the water. It's only in the movies they splash about and cry for help. It's a scary thought.

But once you understand how and where drowning happens, there are things you can do to prevent it.



Babies and small children – mostly drown at home in the bath or in the garden, in just a few centimeters of water.

Baths

- Bath seats are great for supporting your baby in the bath but they are not safety aids – a baby shouldn't be left alone in one even for a moment as they can slip out
- Get everything you need ready before bath time because you'll need to stay with your baby or young child all the time they are in the bath
- Don't rely on your toddler to keep an eye on the baby while you pop out for a towel, as they are still too young to understand danger.

In the garden

- Empty the paddling pool out after you've used it
- Turn a pond into a sandpit, or fence it in or cover it while your children are little
- Make sure your child cannot get to the neighbour's pond
- Be alert to ponds or pools when visiting other people's homes.

Older children – can still get into difficulties. They may over-estimate how strong a swimmer they are or under-estimate risks in the sea or open water.

Out and about

- Teach older children to choose safe places to swim like public pools and beaches with lifeguards
- Explain the dangers of swimming in open water, including strong currents, deep, cold water and things under the surface they can't see.

At the beach

- Teach children to swim between the two-coloured red and yellow flags – these mark the areas patrolled by lifeguards
- Inflatables can be swept out to sea when the wind is blowing – keep children off inflatables when the orange windsock is flying and always keep an eye on them.