

Baby Bath Seats and Rings

FACT SHEET

According to professionals, baby bath seats and bath rings give parents a “false sense of security”
(CBC News, 2007)

Since 1983, there have been approximately 12 baby drowning deaths and at least 25 cases where babies almost drowned while using baby bath seats in Canada
(Health Canada, 2000)

Improper use of baby bath seats or rings can lead to severe brain damage associated with drowning or death
(Health Canada, 2007)



Baby bath seats and rings are devices used to hold babies in an upright position while in the bathtub. Some parents use baby bath seats or rings to free up their hands while washing a child. This occurs as suction cups fasten the seat or ring to the bottom of the tub, holding the baby in a stable position in the water. Some of these seats or rings may have an arm that attaches to the side of the bathtub to keep the baby's seat in place.

When are baby bath seats and rings used?

Baby bath seats or rings are meant for babies between the ages of approximately five to ten months old. At this stage, babies have often outgrown a baby bath, but cannot yet pull themselves up into a standing position. However, once babies are able to pull themselves into a standing position (approximately at 10 months of age) baby bath seats or rings should no longer be used. It is important to remember that babies develop at different rates and the suggested age range for a baby bath seat may not be appropriate for all babies.

What are the risks associated with baby bath seats?

According to an Ontario coroner, baby bath seats give parents a “false sense of security” which has led to an increase in infant drowning or injury. This is because babies often look safe, secure, and well supported in baby bath seats or rings, causing some adults to feel confident about ‘safely’ leaving their baby unsupervised while in the water. However, these devices are only meant to be used under the supervision of an adult and can present a drowning risk if a child is left alone.

How can my baby be injured by a baby bath seat or ring?

There are a number of ways that baby bath seats or rings can result in a child being submerged in water. Babies can accidentally slip both legs through a single leg opening and become trapped underwater. Some parents have had problems with suction cups that do not securely fasten to the tub and that break off or are missing entirely from the product. This can result in the baby tipping into the water. As well, it is important to note that if a baby is able to pull itself into a standing position, they may be able to climb out of the seat and fall into the water.

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Tips for Safer Use of a Baby Bath Seat or Ring

NEVER leave a baby in a bath seat or ring without adult supervision.

DO NOT leave an older child in charge of a baby in the bathtub.

Check the product before each use to ensure there is no damage.

Prepare for bath time: bring towels, clothes, diapers, and anything else you might need.

Between 2.5 to 5 centimeters of water (1 to 2 inches) is enough for your baby to splash and play while being washed.

Stop using a bath seat or ring AS SOON AS your baby can pull themselves up into a standing position.

Centre for Public Safety and
Criminal Justice Research

33844 King Road
Abbotsford, BC
V2S 7M8
604 854-4553
<http://cjr.ufv.ca>

If baby bath seats and rings are dangerous, why are they available?

Millions of parents use baby bath rings without any problem. However, due to several instances of drowning or injury, interest groups in Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom have called for a ban on these products. Although bath seats and rings have not been banned, several countries have made it mandatory to place a label on the product warning parents that the device is not a safety aid.

How can I reduce the risks associated with using these devices?

It is up to the parent to decide whether to use a baby bath seat or ring. It is important to remember that **children under the age of five must NEVER be left in the bathtub without adult supervision**. Even if a baby appears to be safe and secure they should always be kept within arms reach. Some incidences of bathtub drowning or injury have occurred with a parent in the room. Keeping hands on young children should occur at all times during bathing. In addition, babies should never be left without adult supervision even if an older child is in charge since many instances of drowning or injury have happened when an older sibling was left to supervise the baby. Baby bath seats and rings are NOT safety devices and should never be used as such since a child can drown quickly and quietly even in a few inches of water.

“Whether a child is in a bath seat or not, the main danger to an infant in the bath is being left unsupervised” (ACAP)

Resources

- BC Children’s Hospital
<http://www.bcchildrens.ca/NR/rdonlyres/7D4F2339-B38F-4BB9-BFA0-C5487226F73E/11009/Baby20bath20seat20warning20Oct2005.pdf>
- Health Canada
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/bath_seat-sieges_de_bain_e.html
- CBC News
<http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2007/06/05/baby-bath-seats.html>