

Swimming exercises for babies with achondroplasia

3 – 12 months

Habituation

Get the baby into the habit to be in water though making him feel it in the face, arms, body and legs.

De-contraction

Favor the tonic balance, that is, easy the contraction appearing when putting him or her into the water.

Posture control

Baby on his or her back (aligned hips, head and knees); if the baby rejects the position (it can be frequent) we must try to help with the aid of our look, contact and the use of objects.

First, we will hold the baby lying on our arms, offering him/her as wide a contact surface as possible and our face close to his or hers. We will wait for the baby to become familiar with the position.

After being familiar with the position, we will hold him or her with just one hand under his or her neck y the palm of our other hand in his/her coccyx (tailbone); our thumb and index finger lean on his/her buttocks.

Once the baby has a relaxed muscle tone (not tense) and he/she appears receptive, we will progressively retiring the hand from the coccyx holding him/her only with one hand.

Finally, we will alternate the support of the hands (one and then another) until the baby starts keeping the flotation.

Respiratory control

We must exercise the glottis reflect, or its automatism, immersing him/her for a few seconds. This exercise will be done with the exercises above, as the baby rotates his/her face to the side.

Stimulation of alternative movements of legs

Although the baby hasn't started to voluntarily march it will be nevertheless good to stimulate her/his lower limbs. This will be done by holding his/her hips on a back

position and actually doing the movement she has to end up doing on her/his own. This will be done rhythmically, carefully and with a slow sliding.

Crawling and manipulative practice

On his/her belly we can play with the possibility of the world of objects, with different materials, with games like presence/absence, with tapestry...

Flotation

Once he/she has acquired a postural control and a relaxation, flotation will come as a consequence. So, the support of the hands will alternate.

12-24 months

We will try to ensure the habituation and adaptation to the water and the acquisition of balance.

Balance

Stand behind the baby, with the support above described of the alternation between one hand and the other under his/her neck, with the fingertips on the baby's shoulders.

We will slowly and rhythmically make him/her oscillate left and right, so the baby starts to answer with an opposite reaction movement. It is good to bring his/her feet near the overflow drain in order to make him/her lean his/her feet soles; with light impulses towards the wall he/she will feel and learning the movement and tension of his/her legs.

Basic motricity

— Postural adjustment: we will try to correct and adjust gestures and postures which take functionality from his/her movements.

— Turning over: the baby must be already able to keep balance autonomously. We will unbalance him/her until he/she is on his/her side so he/she reacts searching a way out for his/her breathing airways. Since now on, we will propose turning over situations consisting on the full turning over, 360°, slowly, with one of our hands on the shoulder we are going to push and the other under the shoulder we are going to pull. We will show him or her the way out, keeping close.

Motor expresivity

At this stage the baby has control of her natural body environment adaptation mechanisms and will use them as a way to express herself in the water.

— Turning over: from feet to head and the opposite; a hand on her buttocks and the other one on her neck. With a rhythmic movement we will push from the

buttocks up to the vertical letting her fall on her belly; we will show her the way out to the surface keeping our hand with her to show her the movement.

– Jump: once she answers to unbalancing situations, we will be able to practice some kind of falling. This is basically from one year on.

– Movement through the water: different kinds: with her arms or legs or both at the same time, alternating, on her back or on her belly.

© Carmen Barreal for Fundación ALPE 2012