How to keep your baby safe during bath time

Bathing your baby is important for keeping your little one clean, and it can give you a chance to bond with her. Before putting your child in the tub, however, make sure you know how to make bath time a safe and comfortable experience.

Thirty-one infant deaths have been associated with baby bath tubs since 2004, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Nearly all of the babies who died drowned after a parent or caregiver left them alone in the infant bath tub. In addition, 171 injuries have been reported, including near-drownings, burns from hot water, head injuries, cuts and rashes.

Infant tubs with sharp parts or bumps can cause bruises or cuts. In addition, tubs can break or fall, babies can slip or fall out of them, and their hands and feet can get trapped. Mold inside a tub also can lead to breathing problems and rashes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and CPSC urge parents to follow these tips to keep infants safe in the bathtub:

- Use a safe, sturdy tub. Baby bath tubs can be “bucket style” for sitting upright, slanted for support, inflatable, folding and spa-style. Make sure all the parts of the tub are working properly and are attached securely. Foldable tubs can be more convenient for storage but often are not as sturdy as non-foldable ones. Many of the injuries that involved a baby’s limb or other body part becoming trapped happened in a tub that folded. Inflatable tubs may be more likely to collapse.

- Be aware of bumps, edges and slings. In many of the incidents where bumps on the tub caused injuries, a sling made of fabric or mesh was involved. Consider avoiding tubs with slings or pay close attention to any bumps or edges that pose a risk. When buying a hard plastic tub, look for a smooth shape and edges. Avoid tubs with places where your baby could be pinched.

- Check for rust and mold. Drain the tub completely after each use to avoid rust and mold. You also can use a tub with a plug or drain at the base to drain water after bath time. Some tubs even have a mildew-resistant foam lining.

- Never leave a child alone in a bathtub. Children can drown in 1 or 2 inches of water. Don’t turn your back even for a moment or leave babies in the care of another child.

- Check water temperature. Lower the temperature of your water heater to below 120 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid burns.

— Madeline Sturgeon