

10 tips for bath time

Most babies love a nice bath. It's warm, soothing, and because babies love skin-to-skin contact, bathing offers another great opportunity for warm interaction between you and your little one. How often should you bathe your baby? Check with your doctor; more than likely he or she won't recommend a daily bath. The frequency depends on your climate, your baby's health, and the time of the year. Sponge baths are a good idea until the baby is about 6 weeks old. Of course bathe more often as the situation requires. When your baby starts to eat solid foods, you may need to bathe him more often.

Temperature counts. Your baby can't regulate his body temperature as well as you can, so always bathe him in a warm room. The water should be at body temperature. Always check the bathwater temperature with the underside of your wrist before you place your baby into the water.

Get a grip. A wet baby is a slippery baby, so use both hands to bathe him. Watch for his natural startled reaction to the water, which may cause him to slip out of your grasp. To keep your baby from slipping in the sink or tub, lay a towel beneath him to act as a soft bath mat. Choose a mild soap. A newborn's skin is very sensitive, so use only mild, no-tears baby soaps and shampoos. Avoid using oils, lotions, and other toiletries on your baby unless a doctor recommends them.

Be prepared. Collect soap, towels, and other bath items so they're close at hand before you begin a bath.

Hair care. Until your baby is several months old, shampoo his hair about once a week. Use a mild no-tears shampoo and place a washcloth on his forehead to help keep drips out of his eyes. Of course if your baby has lots of hair, shampoo whenever necessary.

Cradle-cap care. For the first few months you may notice little flakes on your baby's scalp that are caused by cradle cap. Simply remove the flakes by gently brushing his hair with a soft brush after you've lathered it with shampoo.

Then rinse. Pat dry. When tub time is done, bundle up your baby in a clean, soft towel and dry him off by gently patting (not rubbing) his skin and hair. Then take a deep breath and enjoy the wonderful fresh smell of your little one.

Water safety. Never leave your baby alone in any amount of water—even for a second. When your baby is in the bathtub or sink, warn siblings against turning on bathtub or sink faucets to avoid accidental burns.

Be gentle. Babies generally don't need to be scrubbed, so a soft washcloth and mild soap are all you'll need to keep your little one clean. Pat, don't rub, your baby dry.

