

Baby Bath Tips

Basic tips to bathing your baby:

Establish a routine. Whether you're giving your baby a bath every night or alternating tub time with sponge baths, the nightly routine will help set your baby's body clock ("Mommy's giving me a bath — that means it's almost time for bed"). Reinforce the sleepy-time message by dimming the lights and keeping the noise and activity down after the bath is over. You should, however, postpone the bath if your baby is hungry, grumpy or has an upset tummy — that wouldn't be good for anyone involved. And keep in mind that while bedtime baths are relaxing, it's fine if another time of day works better for you and your baby.

Gather your supplies. Have everything you'll need at your fingertips before you start (otherwise, you'll have to gather up your naked newborn mid-bath to fetch whatever you've forgotten). The essentials include mild baby soap, one or two cotton washcloths, a blanket, a couple of plush towels, a plastic basin filled with warm water.

Keep it toasty. Babies lose body heat very quickly so make sure the bathing room is warm enough (75 to 80 degrees) before you get started (turn up the thermostat or steam up the room by letting the shower run on hot for a few minutes). Whether you're using an infant tub or a sink (save the big tub for when he's actually sitting up), fill it first (never put a baby in while the water is still running) with just enough water to cover the bottom of his body. The water should be comfortably warm, so test the temperature with your elbow or the inside of your wrist.

Get a grip. Gently slide your baby into the tub, feet first, holding him securely with one of your arms under his head (use your hand to grasp his underarm farthest away from you) and the other supporting his tush. (He may be slippery as a fish, but you'll soon get the hang of how to hang on to him.) Once he's in, avoid letting him sit for too long in water — it can irritate his skin, plus he might get chilly.

Soap up sparingly. Use a mild soap on his hands and diaper area. You can just use water on the rest of his body most days, unless he's really dirty.

Where to bathe:

Focus on his face first. Dip a corner of a washcloth or cotton ball in the warm water, and gently wipe one eye from the inner corner outward. Using a different corner of the cloth or a clean cotton ball, clean the other eye. Wet the washcloth entirely and wash your baby's face, especially around his mouth and under his chin where milk and drool can pool, and inside and behind his ears.

Wash baby's body. Dip the washcloth in warm water and wash your little one's neck and torso. Next clean under his arms and between his fingers. Be sure to get into those little creases and skin folds.

Go easy on the private parts. Use a soft, clean cloth, gentle soap and lukewarm water to clean your baby's genitals. Have a girl? Wash the area from front to back, and don't forget to gently wipe between skin folds. (But no need to clean inside the labia.) Simply wipe your circumcised baby boy's penis clean; if your baby boy is uncircumcised, no need to pull back his foreskin. Use a little soap for your baby's bum.

Stay safe. Never leave a baby alone in or near the tub, and always keep at least one hand on his body at all times.

After you're done:

Skip the slathering. That beautiful (and ultrasensitive) skin doesn't need any lotions, oils or creams. Some skin potions can lead to rashes, not to mention mask that incredible natural baby smell. Also avoid powders, which can irritate a baby's breathing passages. However if your practitioner has a good reason to recommend one (i.e., your baby has dry or eczema-prone skin), massage a hypoallergenic lotion into his skin (warm it first between your palms).

Diaper and dress. Slip on a fresh diaper and [dress your little](#) one in some clean clothes. If he needs a little soothing after his sponge bath, swaddle him in a blanket, then get settled in for a snuggle with your clean, sweet-smelling sweetie.