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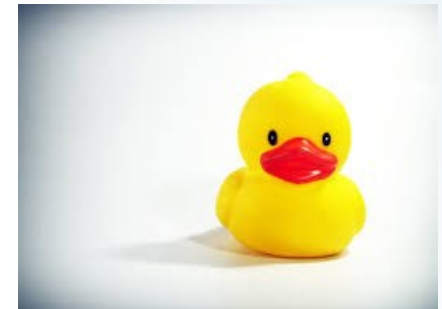
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Bathing your Newborn

London Health Sciences Centre

Bathing your baby

The ideal time for a baby's first bath is 24 - 48 hours after birth. Reasons for this include:

- Babies are born with vernix, a wax-like substance which protects them from germs in the environment and provides immunity as it is absorbed into their body.

- The bath can cause the release of stress hormones that may lower your baby's blood sugar.

- Staying warm after birth uses a lot of your baby's energy and having a bath can make staying warm harder to do.

Source: https://www.healthunit.com/bath-time

A baby does not need to be bathed every day as this may dry out their skin. For a newborn, having a bath two or three times a week is enough. Simply washing his/her face and hands often with a warm cloth and cleaning well with diaper changes will help to keep him/her clean between full baths.

Tips for Safe Newborn Bathing

∗ Make sure you have all of your supplies within reach so that you never leave your baby alone — mild soap, wash cloth, towels, clean clothing, diaper, etc.

∗ Do not bathe your baby right after feeding as they may spit up.

∗ Bathe your baby in a warm room; the water should feel comfortable to the touch and not be too hot (no warmer than 49°C/120°F). Test the water with the inside of your wrist first.

∗ Fill the tub with about 2 inches of water (baby should be wet up to about their belly button).

∗ Only use soap on the dirtiest areas. Ensure it is mild, scent & dye-free and rinse well after using to prevent skin irritation.

∗ Remove any jewelry that might scratch your baby.

∗ **Hold your baby securely; never take your hands off your baby during the bath. He/she will be slippery!**

∗ Wash from top to bottom, front to back (clean to dirty) using a clean washcloth.

∗ Start with the face. Do not use soap and begin with baby's eyes, washing from inner to outer corner, using a clean part of the cloth for each eye. Then continue washing baby's face.

∗ Wash baby's hair after his/her face. Dry and cover their head once hair is washed to prevent as much heat loss as possible. Continue washing down baby's body from head to toe, washing baby's genitals and bottom last.

∗ Baby girls—Always wipe genitals from front to back, preventing stool from entering the vagina. Gently wash around the vaginal folds.

∗ Baby boys—Gently wash the penis without ever pulling back the foreskin. Usually, it is not fully retractable until a boy is three to five years old, or even until after puberty. Never force it. If your baby was circumcised you will receive specific instructions about care of the penis.

∗ Completely pat your baby dry with a towel at the end of the bath, especially in skin folds. Lotions/creams are not necessary. If you choose to use one select one that is unscented to avoid skin irritation.

∗ You can bathe your baby before the umbilical cord stump falls off, simply pat it dry after the bath.

∗ Do not use cotton swabs (Q-tips) to clean inside your baby's nose or ears. Any mucus or earwax will work itself out in time. Instead, use a clean wash cloth wrapped around your little finger to clean the outer ear and/or nose.

∗ Avoid cutting your baby's nails for approximately 2 weeks after birth as their skin under the nail may still be attached. Consider filing them if they are long and sharp.

To watch a video demonstration and for more information please visit:

https://www.healthunit.com/bath-time