



Bathing Your Newborn

Your Baby's First Baths: You've Got This!

Bringing your newborn home can feel overwhelming—especially when it comes to something as simple (and slippery!) as bath time. Don't worry—you've got this. With a little preparation and gentle care, sponge baths will soon feel natural for both you and your baby.

Before the Cord Falls Off

Until your baby's **umbilical cord falls off (usually within 1–3 weeks)**, stick to **sponge baths only**. Avoid tub baths until the cord and, if applicable, a circumcision site have completely healed.

You don't need to bathe your baby every day. Clean the diaper area at each change and plan for a full sponge bath **every other day in warm weather** or **once or twice a week in cooler months**.

Setting Up for Success

Get everything ready **before you begin** and **never leave your baby unattended**—even for a second. Babies can move suddenly and roll off the surface. Choose a **warm, draft-free area** (like the bathroom or kitchen).

Newborns can't regulate temperature well, so keep them warm and watch for mottled or blotchy skin, which means they're chilly. If your baby cries during the bath (and many do!), it doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. Try keeping a towel draped over your baby's body, uncovering just the area you're washing. It helps keep them warm and calm. Bath time often goes best when your baby isn't too hungry or too full.

What You'll Need

- Basin or sink with warm water (check with your wrist or elbow—it should feel just warm, not hot)
- Mild baby soap or shampoo
- Washcloth
- Alcohol, cotton balls, and Q-tips
- Blanket or towel for wrapping baby
- Clean diaper and outfit

Step-by-Step Sponge Bath

1. **Undress baby:** Leave the diaper on for now to avoid surprises. Wrap your baby in a towel or blanket
2. **Eyes:** Use a damp cotton ball for each eye, wiping from inner corner (near the nose) to the outer corner.
3. **Nose:** Gently clean just inside the nostrils with a cotton ball. Avoid getting water in the nose.
4. **Ears:** Use a washcloth to wipe around and behind the ears—never inside the ear canal.
5. **Face:** Wipe with a clean, damp washcloth (no soap). Pat dry gently.
6. **Hair:** Support your baby's head and rinse water from the washcloth over the scalp. Use a small amount of mild shampoo, rinse thoroughly, and pat dry. Daily scalp cleaning can help prevent cradle cap.
7. **Body:** Remove the diaper. Gently wash and rinse the rest of the body, especially skin folds around the thighs and groin. Avoid getting the unhealed cord or circumcision area wet.
8. **Cord care:** Lift the cord stump and gently clean around the base with alcohol on cotton ball or Q-tip.

Your baby may not love sponge baths at first—but with each one, you'll both get more comfortable. Keep things calm, quick, and warm, and before long, bath time will become a sweet part of your routine.