

Bathing hacks: How to give your newborn a sponge bath

Don't worry about giving baby a bath in the first few weeks. Until baby's umbilical stump has fallen off and their belly button has healed, they only need a sponge bath two or three times a week. Our step-by-step guide to cleaning newborns starts at their head and ends at their bottom!

- While you are still in the hospital or still with your midwife, ask them to show you how to give your newborn a sponge bath.

- You don't need to wash your baby every day—for the first few weeks all your newborn needs is a sponge bath two or three times per week to wash their face, neck, hands and bottom.

- You will need a change pad, a basin or bowl of lukewarm water, a clean washcloth, cotton balls or cotton pads, some baby soap, a fresh diaper, clean clothes, and a clean soft towel or blanket.

- Wash your hands thoroughly and remove any rings or other jewelry.

- Check the room is nice and warm—you can warm up a bathroom by letting a hot shower run for a few minutes first.

- Spread out your change pad and cover with a towel or blanket for comfort.

- Undress your baby and lie them down on top and then cover with a towel or blanket for warmth.

- Start with baby's eyes. Use a cotton ball or pad or the clean washcloth and gently wipe your baby's eyes from the nose outwards. Continue to clean the rest of baby's face. You don't need soap for this

step.

- Work your way down the rest of baby's body – all the way to their feet - with mild soap.
- Don't forget their creases, like their armpits, behind their knees and ears, and between their tiny toes.
- You don't need to clean inside their ears or other orifices.
- Wash their diaper area last.
- If your baby still has vernix (the creamy white layer) in their creases, leave it there as it helps the skin barrier to develop.
- The umbilical cord stump should fall off within 1 to 3 weeks. Talk to you doctor if you have any questions or are concerned about the appearance of the umbilical area.
- Keep your baby's umbilical cord stump clean and dry—water is all you need to clean it. Do not pull on the stump even if it is close to falling off. It will fall off on its own.
- Shampoo baby's hair once or twice a week using the football hold and your hand to support their head. Hold their head over the sink and use your other hand to wet their head, later the shampoo, and rinse the shampoo. Dry their head quickly to keep them warm.
- When your done giving your newborn a sponge bath, gently wrap them in a towel or blanket and pat dry.
- Work quickly to dress baby in a clean diaper and clothes as newborns lose heat quickly.
- Once your newborn baby's umbilical cord stump has fallen off and the area is healed, you can start to bathe them more frequently and in a small tub, [read our checklist to find out how to do it](#) [1].

Sources

Sick Kids. About Kids Health. Bath time for newborn babies.

<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=435&language=English> [2] Accessed August 2020.

Canadian Paediatric Society. Caring for Kids. Your baby's skin.

<https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/your-babys-skin> [3] Accessed August 2020.

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Links

[1] <https://www.nestlebaby.ca/en/node/2825807/>

[2] <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=435&language=English>

[3] <https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/your-babys-skin>