

# Bathing

**Genitalia (male):** Cleanse and dry penis and scrotum. Cleanse and dry anal (rectal) area. Apply unscented Vaseline to area prior to diapering. Do not push back foreskin. Refer to Care of the Uncircumcised Penis information sheet. If your baby is circumcised, refer to Circumcision information sheet.

Rinse well, then lift the baby out of the tub and dry immediately with a large towel. Check the skin folds for any sign of irritation and dry these areas carefully. Dress the baby quickly.

*If you would like to practice bathing your baby while in hospital, your nurse would be happy to help you.*

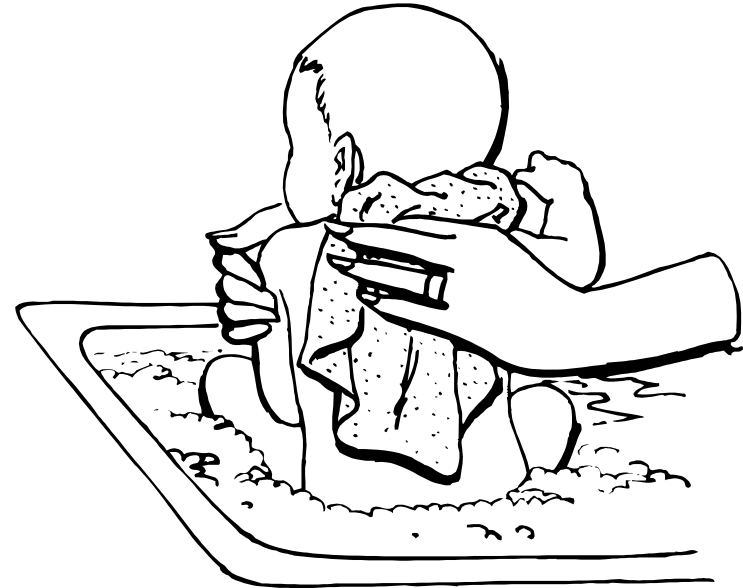


The baby's bath provides an excellent opportunity for parents to socialize with their baby and to take a closer look at their baby's body. As the baby grows, bath time also becomes a time for play and exercise.



The bath may be given at any time convenient for the parent, except right after the baby's feeding. While it is important that the creases in the baby's skin and diaper area be cleaned daily, parents should not feel they must bathe their baby every day. It is no longer thought necessary to sponge bathe the baby until the cord falls off. A tub bath is OK.

**Body:** Wash the body by using either your hand or a washcloth. Begin at the neck paying special attention to creases at the neck, armpit and groin areas, as you work your way down. Wash his or her back. Rinse well, especially if you have used soap.



**Genitalia (female):** Wash gently from front to back, then cleanse anal (rectal) area by also wiping front to back. Apply unscented Vaseline to area prior to diapering to act as a barrier to body waste.

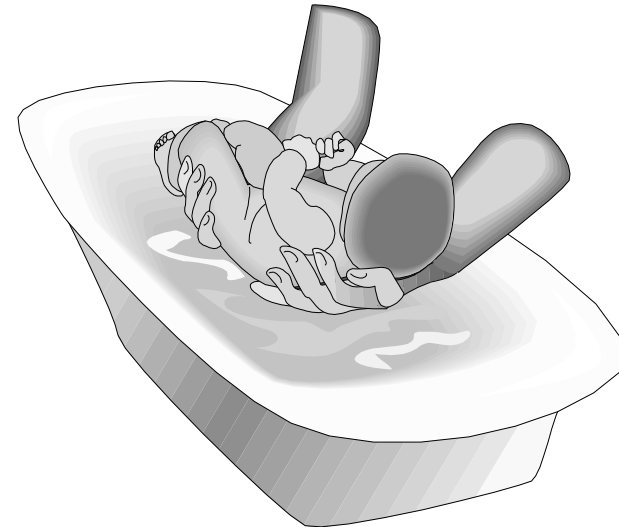
**Cord Care:** As parents you may hear about different ways to care for the cord. The most important thing is to make sure the cord is allowed to dry. You may have been advised by your nurse or doctor to clean the base of the cord with rubbing alcohol and cotton-tipped applicators. The alcohol is believed to help the healing process by drying the cord. Others suggest that just cleaning the cord with water as part of the bath is fine too. After the bath, thoroughly dry the cord using dry cotton-tipped applicators. Try to keep the cord as dry as possible.

Clean the cord base 2 – 3 times daily at bath time or with each diaper change until healed. The cord will fall off between 2 – 4 weeks after delivery. When it does, it may leave a raw area at the point of attachment. Sometimes this may cause a small amount of blood spotting but the area will soon heal.

If the cord area becomes red, smells funny or has a discharge call your physician.

### **BATH SAFETY:**

- Never leave your baby alone on the table or in the bath, and when reaching for anything, keep one hand on the baby.
- Never add warm or hot water to basin or bath tub while baby is in it.
- Always support the baby's head and neck with your hand when picking him or her up. Hold the two heaviest parts, the head and the hips.
- Keep the baby's towel and washcloth for his or her use only.
- Don't use cornstarch or baby powder for powdering as it may increase diaper rash.



## Preparing for the Bath:

Things you will need:

- Basin
- Washcloth
- Towel
- Mild non-perfumed soap

Fill the baby's tub with warm water to about 2-3" deep. Use water that feels comfortable on your wrist and elbow. Slowly lower the baby into the tub supporting him or her with your arm, keeping a firm grip with one hand. There are many bath aids on the market to make this easier.

Remember, a baby should be bathed quickly to avoid chilling.



**Eyes:** Gently cleanse eyelids from inner corner to outer with a facecloth moistened with clear water. Use a separate corner of the washcloth for each eye to prevent spreading any infection from eye to the other.

**Face:** Use washcloth and clear water.

**Nose:** Never use cotton-tipped applicators to remove particles from the entrance to the nostrils, since they may push mucus or other articles further into the nose.

**Ears:** Wash well behind the ears and thoroughly dry both the outer ear and behind it. Never clean the ear canal with a cotton-tipped applicator or any other pointed article. It may cause damage and push wax further into the ear canal. Any wax in the ear will work out naturally.



**Hair:** Wash the baby's hair once or twice a week. Wrap the baby in a towel or baby blanket and hold under your arm (football hold with the baby's head over the basin or tub and his or her face turned upward). Using a mild soap or shampoo, wash gently but thoroughly and rinse well because soap is drying to the skin. Dry the baby completely. Brush hair gently. Following these steps will help to prevent cradle cap.