NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL℠

700 Children's Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43205-2696
nationwidechildrens.org

BATHING YOUR BABY

Giving your baby a mild soap bath 3 or 4 times a week will help to keep your baby clean and will help prevent skin rashes and chafing. A plain water bath may be given on the other days or if your baby is warm and sweaty.

Bath time can be a fun time for you and your baby. It's a pleasant experience for baby to kick and move about without clothes on. It's a good time to talk to your baby and let him learn to make sounds and make eye contact with you.

SAFETY TIPS

Here are some safety tips to remember when you give baby a bath:

- Gather all the things you will need **before** you start to give the bath.
- The temperature of the room should be warm to keep baby from chilling. Try to use an area free of drafts.
- The bath water temperature should be slightly above 100°F to prevent chilling or burning the baby. If you don't have a bath thermometer, test the water with your elbow. When you put your elbow in the water, it should feel warm, not hot.
- Always keep a firm hold on baby during the bath. Soapy bodies are slippery.
- Keep one hand on your baby when you turn away from him or her or step to the side.
- **Never leave your baby alone during the bath, not even "for a second."** Accidents can happen quickly.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ Clean basin or tub
- ❑ Soft washcloth
- ❑ 2 bath towels
- ❑ Diaper
- ❑ Shirt, gown, or stretch sleeper
- ❑ Safety pins and pin holder (if diapers don't have their own closures)
- ❑ Baby shampoo
- ❑ Comb and hair brush
- ❑ Fingernail clippers
- ❑ Mild soap (such as Ivory®)
- ❑ Cotton receiving blanket

Picture 1 Bathing baby on a pad.

BATHING BABY

- Your baby may be bathed on a towel, blanket, or changing table until his umbilical cord falls off or until he is old enough to sit up.
- Make a bath pad by putting a clean towel on top of a folded blanket.
- It's important to bathe the baby quickly to keep the baby from chilling.

Copyright 1978-2006, Nationwide Children's Hospital

HOW TO BATHE YOUR BABY

1. Wash your hands.
2. Fill the wash basin or baby bathtub with about 3 inches of warm water. Test for correct temperature. Don't overfill the tub.
3. Arrange all items within easy reach.
4. Undress your baby and place him on the pad.
5. **Eyes:** Wash baby's eyelids gently with the corner of a soft washcloth and clear water. Start at the inner corner of the eye and wash toward the ears. Use a fresh part of the washcloth for each eye.
6. **Face:** Using the washcloth, wash the baby's face with clear water. Don't use soap on baby's face.

Picture 2 Hold your baby securely.

7. **Ears:** Wash the outer part of each ear with a washcloth moistened with clear water. Pat ears dry. **Do not use cotton swabs (such as Q-tips®) inside baby's ears.**
8. **Hair and scalp:** Pick up your baby. Support his head in your hand and his back with your forearm (Picture 2). Rest baby's buttocks on your hip. (Holding your baby this way gives him a sense of security.) Wet baby's head with clear water. Using a small amount of baby shampoo, make a soapy lather with your hands. Put a small amount of soapy lather on his head, including the "soft spot." Rub gently in a circular motion. Hold baby's head over the basin. Rinse soap off with water using your cupped hand or a wet washcloth. When all the soap is off, pat his head gently with a towel to dry.
9. **Body:** Place baby on the pad. Make a soapy lather with your hands. Start at the neck and lather baby's entire body. Be sure to clean the skin folds, between fingers and toes, and the genital area. (If your baby boy is not circumcised, don't pull back the foreskin on the penis to clean it. This could injure the child's penis.) Rinse the soap off with a wet washcloth. Dry the baby with a soft towel.

AFTER THE BATH

1. Dry your baby well and dress him.
2. Don't use powders or oils on baby's skin. Babies have their own natural oils, and using oils and powders can decrease the amount of their own oils.
3. Brush and comb baby's hair.
4. **Nails:** Clean baby's fingernails and toenails. Clip the nails with manicure scissors as needed. If the fingernails are not kept short, the baby may scratch his face.
5. Put baby in a safe place while you clean the bath area. Put items back on a tray and store it out of the reach of children.

SPECIAL SCALP CARE

- If your baby's scalp becomes dry, scaly, or "dirty looking," put a small amount of baby oil on the hair after shampooing. Leave it on until the next day. The next day, brush the hair and scalp well to remove old skin, then shampoo the baby's hair.
- If the scalp still doesn't look clean, keep doing this every day until it looks normal.
- If you do this several times and the scalp still doesn't look normal to you, ask your child's doctor what to do about it.
- Wash the brush and comb with soapy water, rinse, and dry.

If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or nurse or call _____.