BATHING

Splish Splash I Was Taking a Bath

Giving a baby a bath requires a little extra planning and a little courage on your part. Many new parents find this is a frightening task. The baby could catch a cold or slip under water. . . . Your fears are understandable. Many babies do not like to be undressed and bathed. It is not uncommon for babies to cry throughout the whole experience. Fortunately, even if the first bath seems like a disaster, you will both recover! Here are a few suggestions to consider when you’re ready to take the plunge.

Things to remember:

- Never leave your child unattended.
- You can just wash the areas that get most dirty such as the face, neck, hands, and diaper area. If you do this on a regular basis a full bath may only be necessary once a week.
- Gather any soaps, shampoos, towels, toys, clean clothing, and diapering items you need before you begin the bath.
- Try to keep the room warm and draft-free.
- Add water to the tub before you place your baby in the tub, protecting the baby from sudden temperature changes.
- Check the water temperature with your elbow to make sure it is warm but not hot.
- A bath can be given anytime but creating an evening routine for bathing may help your child relax and prepare for bed.

Sponge-bathing your newborn:

- Give your baby a sponge bath for the first few weeks until the umbilical cord has fallen off and circumcision is healed. Make sure you are both comfortable and everything you need is within reach. Many parents use the changing table, kitchen counter, or crib if the mattress is high enough.
- Try undressing the baby completely and covering him loosely with a towel. You can then uncover the area you are ready to wash and dry. If the room is chilly you may want to leave the baby dressed and wash, dry, and clothe each area separately.
- A sponge bath can be given one to three times each week, depending on the degree of cleanliness you feel is needed.

Infant baths:

- Use a portable infant bathtub in the kitchen sink, on the kitchen or bathroom counter, on the floor if it’s tiled, or in the big tub. Finding the place where you and baby are most comfortable is important. You may want to place a dry towel under the tub for extra traction. Run about two inches of water in the baby tub and remember to check the temperature.
- Undress baby completely and place him slowly and gently in the tub.
If you are bathing your newborn in a seated position gently but firmly support his head by placing your hand beneath his chin, your thumb and forefinger below each ear, resting on his jawbones.

If your baby is lying back, place his head on your left forearm and grasp your baby firmly but gently beneath his left arm.

You may find that your infant tub provides enough support without your needing to hang on. You may want to try several soap-free baths until you feel secure. Soapy babies are very slippery!

Wash your baby with your free hand.

Wrap your baby in a towel and pat him dry.

Not every baby takes to the tub. Some babies take time to warm up to new experiences. You may need to keep trying over time until your baby feels comfortable. Continuing to give sponge baths will probably keep your baby clean enough until he begins crawling. This will give you the opportunity to introduce the tub gradually. Bathing one to three times each week will keep your baby clean. If your baby really loves the bath then this can be a fun daily routine. Some parents refer to bath time as “water therapy.”

Using the bathtub:

- You may want to continue using the infant tub until your baby can sit securely, sometime between six and ten months. At about the same time your baby may begin to try crawling and feeding himself. All of this may amount to a much dirtier baby.
- Many babies begin to enjoy baths in the bathtub at this age. Three to four inches of water is all you need. A rubber mat in the bottom of the tub will help prevent slipping and sliding.
- You may want to place your hand on the baby’s back for extra support.
- You may want to take a bath with your baby and hold her on your lap.

Bathtub safety:

- Continue to check the water temperature.
- Keep shampoo and soap out of baby’s reach.
- Wrap a washcloth around faucet and handles that may be hot.

Having fun:

- The bath can be a time when you and your baby can relax and enjoy each other.
- Put a few toys in the tub.
- Try “filling and dumping” games.
- Give your baby a washcloth so she can help too.
- Try talking and singing together.
- Play finger and toe games.

My baby’s first bath was______________________________.