

How to bathe a newborn

Washing a newborn for the first time can be a daunting experience, but it can also be a lovely bonding moment. Here are a few tips for how to bathe a newborn safely.

- ✧ You don't need to wash your baby every day; for the first few weeks it may be easier to top and tail instead.
- ✧ A bath two to three times a week is enough to keep your newborn clean.
- ✧ Bath time is also a lovely way to spend time bonding with your little one.
- ✧ Never leave your baby in the bath unattended, not even for a second.
- ✧ Choose a time when your baby is content and awake - avoid when they are tired, hungry or have just been fed.
- ✧ Make sure the room is nice and warm for when baby comes out of the bath.
- ✧ Prep the room beforehand. You will need: baby bath or clean washing up bowl, a clean nappy, clean towels, a bowl of cooled, boiled water, clean clothes, bath thermometer and cotton wool.
- ✧ Fill the baby's bath to about 8-10cm deep, run the cold water first then add hot water and swish the water around to avoid hot spots.
- ✧ Check the baby's bath water temperature using the thermometer, it shouldn't be over 38°C.
- ✧ Wash your hands thoroughly and remove any rings or bracelets.
- ✧ Before putting the baby into the water test the temperature again with your elbow, it should be warm with no hot spots.



- ✧ Undress your baby down to their nappy. Keep them warmly wrapped in a towel while you wash their face and eyes.
- ✧ Use cotton wool balls moistened with cooled, boiled water and check the temperature of the water before. Wipe from the inside of the eye outward, using each piece of cotton wool once only.
- ✧ Hold your baby so that their head is over the bath water and, using your hand or a flannel, massage their scalp with water. Rinse their hair carefully and dry it.
- ✧ Remove your baby's nappy and clean away any mess before putting them in the bath.
- ✧ Lower your baby gently into the bowl or bath using one hand to hold their upper arm and support their head and shoulders.
- ✧ To hold them firmly but gently, place one hand around the back and grip under their arm, with your wrist or forearm supporting their head. Your other hand is then free to wash your baby.
- ✧ Gently swish warm water over their body, keeping your baby's head clear of the water.
- ✧ If your baby still has vernix (the creamy white layer) in their creases, leave it there as it helps the skin barrier to develop.
- ✧ Lift your baby out of the bath, with one hand around the back and the other gripping under their arm. Your wrist or forearm should support their head. Be careful, as they can be quite slippery.
- ✧ Wrap your baby in a towel, remembering to cover their head, and pat dry, including all the creases. Put a nappy on.
- ✧ Now is a good time to massage your baby to help them relax and sleep. Avoid using any lotions or oil until they are over a month old.
- ✧ Dress baby in clean clothes. Newborns lose heat quickly so you may also want to use a blanket. If your baby gets frightened, try bathing together. Just make sure the water isn't too hot and someone is around to hold your baby when you get in and out of the bath. This helps to get baby used to the water and is a lovely bonding moment.