
Taking a Sitz Bath

A sitz bath is a type of therapy done by sitting in warm, shallow water. It can help soothe pain, itching, and other symptoms in the anal and genital areas. It can also help keep these areas clean if you can't take a bath or shower. Sitz is from the German word *sitzen*, which means to sit.

Why a sitz bath is done

A sitz bath helps clean and treat certain problems in the anal area, genital area, and the perineum. The perineum is the area between the anus and the vulva in women. In men, it is between the anus and the scrotum. A sitz bath helps increase blood flow to these areas and relax the muscles.

A sitz bath may be done to:

- Help ease pain and itching from hemorrhoids
- Help ease pain from an anal fissure
- Bathe and soothe the perineum after childbirth
- Clean and soothe the anal area or perineum after surgery
- Ease prostate pain during prostatitis or after a procedure
- Help ease period cramps
- Clean the anal and genital areas if you can't take a bath or shower

How a sitz bath is done

A sitz bath can be done in two ways: in a bathtub or using a sitz bath bowl.

In a bathtub

To take a sitz bath in a tub:

- Make sure your bathtub is clean. Fill a clean bathtub with 3 to 4 inches of warm water. In some cases, your healthcare provider may tell you to use cold water instead.
- Add salt or medicine to the water if advised by your healthcare provider.
- Gently lower yourself down into the bathtub and sit on the bottom of the tub. Don't get into the bath unless the water temperature is comfortable.
- Hold onto a railing. Or ask for help from a family member, friend, or caregiver if needed.

If you have a wound, the water may cause pain at first. But the pain should ease. Make sure the area that needs treating is under the water. You can bend your knees up to help expose the area that needs contact with the water.

Using a sitz bath bowl

A sitz bath bowl is a special plastic container that's placed on a toilet. You can buy this in many drugstores and medical supply stores. To take a sitz bath this way:

- Lift the toilet lid and seat. Place a cleaned plastic sitz bath bowl on the rim of your toilet. Make sure the bowl is firmly in place and won't move around.
- Fill the sitz bath bowl with warm water from a pitcher or other container. The water should cover your perineum. Make sure the water temperature is comfortable.
- Add salt or medicine to the water if advised by your healthcare provider. Or follow the package instructions about how to fill the bowl. Some kits come with a plastic bag and tubing. This lets you stream water into the bowl and at the area of your body that needs treatment. The bowl may have a slot or hole in the back. This lets water flow out so it doesn't overflow onto the floor. If there is no hole, be careful not to fill the bowl too full.
- Gently sit down on the sitz bath bowl. Hold onto a railing. Or ask for help from a family member, friend, or caregiver if needed.

If you have a wound, the water may cause pain at first, but the pain should ease. Make sure the area that needs treating is under the water.

For any type of sitz bath

1. Sit in the water for 10 to 20 minutes.
2. Add more warm water as needed to keep the water comfortable.
3. Get up slowly from the tub or toilet. You may feel lightheaded or dizzy. Hold onto a railing. Or ask for help from a family member, friend, or caregiver if needed.
4. Gently pat your anal area, perineum, and genitals dry with a clean towel. Don't rub the area.
5. Wash your hands. Put any ointment or cream on the area, if advised.
6. Wash the bathtub or sitz bath bowl with soap and water after each use.
7. Use a sitz bath 2 to 3 times a day, or as often as your healthcare provider advises.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Redness, swelling, or fluid leaking from a cut (incision) that gets worse
- Pain that gets worse
- Symptoms that don't get better, or get worse
- New symptoms