

Keeping Baby Clean

“Well, good thing it’s a tub.”

“Yes, it is a good thing it’s a tub.”

Four-month-old Eric enjoys the water, and his older sister loves to bathe him.

“Is this soapy?”

“Not soapy yet, no.”

So, father-daughter time on this Saturday is “keeping baby clean.”

“You’ve helped mom so many times, you know exactly what to do.”

Knowing “exactly what to do” when bathing a newborn requires learning a few key pointers. Such as: how often?

“Newborns don’t really need to be bathed every day. Three times a week is perfectly fine.”

Begin bath time by pouring a few small cup-fulls of lukewarm water over your baby. Now, start at the top: face first. Be sure to get around the eyes: look for any bits of crustiness, dried mucus. You don’t need to use soap when washing the face, just lukewarm water, with your hands, a clean washcloth, or a cotton square. Then, as you start to move around the head, add baby wash, using it sparingly.

“Especially in the newborn period, you do not need a lot of bubbles. So, a mild soap with some water, fragrance free, is perfectly fine to clean your newborn.”

“Is his hair okay? Just get his head wet”.

Gently wash around the head, wetting his hair first, applying just a small amount of baby wash, then rinsing the hair, until all the soap is gone.

“When we are cleaning a newborn’s head, make sure you pay particular attention to the skinfolds behind the ear, under the chin, but never ever put anything in the baby’s ear. Just the exterior part of the ear to clean is perfectly fine.”

When you rinse, use a second, damp cloth: this will help ensure you don’t leave any residue.

“I always think it’s good to go from head to toe. But remember, you don’t want your newborn baby to get cold.”

So, continually rinse with those cup- fulls of warm water. And, as dad is doing here, when washing a baby’s head, cover his or her eyes, to protect them from any soap.

“Ready to do his back?”

Move from neck to waist, making sure to wash the back, and all the way down the arms to the hands. Remember to pay attention to those skin folds like here, under the arms. Excess moisture can lead to irritation. So be sure to wash, and rinse, these areas.

“Perfect, great job!”

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Then, move down, to the lower body.

“The diaper area is a particularly dirty area, so you want to pay particular attention to keeping it clean. So, wash from front to back, and make sure the area is dry and moisturized.”

“All right, coming your way, here he is.”

Now, time to dry off: Be sure to dry your baby *thoroughly* and all over before dressing him. This will help prevent skin irritation and so will a little extra “TLC”.

“After every bath, at least three times a week, you should apply moisturizer to your baby’s skin, to keep the moisture in and to keep your child healthy.”

As with your baby wash, be sure the moisturizer is mild and fragrance-free. As Eric’s dad has learned, bath time is about more than just keeping your baby clean. It can also be good bonding time.

“It’s a great experience for your child, it can be fun for them, it can be fun for you, and a very special time. Enjoy your baby during bath time, and always.”