



rub-a-dub bub

OHbaby! expert and baby whisperer Dorothy Waide offers her no-nonsense guide to bathing a newborn

Lifting your precious newborn into a bath can be a daunting moment. You can ask your midwife at the hospital or birthing centre to help you the first time round, giving you confidence to bathe baby yourself when you get home. My number one piece of advice is to be prepared. Get everything you need ready and within reach.

If it suits, you can include baths as part of the daily routine — maybe around 5-6pm. Some parents worry about baby's skin drying out, but it's not daily bathing that can lead to skin problems — it's the length of time baby spends in the bath. So even if baby loves the water, limit bath time to just a few minutes.

getting ready

You can bathe your baby wherever you like, as long as it's warm and free of draughts. You may find the dining table, the nursery or even, in cooler months, the lounge in front of a toasty fire to be the best place. Ideally, the room temperature will be at least 20°C.

First up, get a clean nappy and a set of clean clothing for baby. Arrange them in the order they will be put on, singlet on top, then nappy, leggings and so on.

Lay out a towel and any other bathing products you need. I recommend olive oil (avoid nut oils because of the risk of provoking an allergic reaction), a mild shampoo, without parabens or sulphates,

“Babies don't really get dirty — the bath is just to freshen them up. Use a cloth to squeeze water over your baby.”



and a mild baby soap. Soap is optional — water with a little oil to moisturise will do the job perfectly. Place your baby on the floor to kick while running the bath. I tend to take the nappy off so she can have some nappy-free time.

running the bath

The temperature of the water can vary from baby to baby. A good range is between 36°C and 38°C (97°F and 100°F). Check the bath temperature by testing with your elbow or use a bath thermometer. Remember, in shallow water the temperature will cool quickly.

Again, the depth of the water varies

from family to family but I always suggest around 5cm to 7.5cm. You can use either the family bath or a portable baby's bath. Do be careful, though, when carrying a bath from the sink to the table, as it can be heavy and new mums need to take special care of their own bodies to help with recovery after birth.

I add a few drops of olive oil to the bath water which helps relieve baby's dry skin or any skin issues. Just drizzle a few drops in the water as you would over a salad.

eyes and face

For newborns, I wash the face before putting them in the bath. I use cotton

wool square pads for the eyes, using a separate pad for each eye and a face cloth for the face. I wet these with warm water and then wash the eyes first, wiping from the inner eye outwards and then drying the eyes and face before putting baby in the bath.

lifting baby into the bath

Now comes the fun part. Strip baby down and hold her with one arm under the back of her neck so it rests on your inner wrist, while you hold her shoulder. Put your other hand under her bottom and lower baby into the bath.

Your hand touches the water first,

the bare necessities

Left to right: Roger Armstrong Primo Infant Bath Support \$29.99, Babycity • Aden+Anais Muslin Washcloths (three-pack) \$24.95, bellybeyond.co.nz • Babu Organic Hooded Towel Velour \$52.80, babu.co.nz • Munchkin Sea Squirts (five-pack) \$19.99, Baby Factory • Tommee Tippee Miomee Bath and Room Thermometer \$46.95, miomee.co.nz • Roger Armstrong Oasis Bath \$39.99, Babycity



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so it's a double-check to ensure the temperature is right.

Remove your hand from your baby's bottom and start to wash baby using a cloth. Wet hair and, if using shampoo, squirt onto your hand first before rubbing onto the head.

Babies don't really get dirty — the bath is just to freshen them up.

Use a cloth to squeeze water over your baby, around the neck, arms and other skin creases. If you're using soap, just use a tiny amount.

Turn baby over and cup her chin in your hand to support her. This position allows you to clean the bottom creases.

drying and dressing

Don't be afraid to rub your baby's head firmly to dry the scalp as well. Elsewhere pat dry, not forgetting around the ears, neck, armpits and between the toes. If the towel is too thick use a muslin cloth.

When dressing, I like to start with the chest but also remember to get the nappy on as soon as possible before baby gets a chance to wee.

Now it's time for a top-up feed and, hopefully, baby will be off to dreamland.

To see the full video of OHbaby! Expert Dorothy Waide bathing Baby Abby go to ohbaby.co.nz/baby.

