Swaddle Bathing
Clinical Practice Guideline

Swaddle bathing is research-based best practice for neonatal bathing.

• 2016 NANN Advances in Neonatal Care article recommends that NICUs adopt a protocol for swaddle bathing. Tub or immersion bathing is beneficial for full-term and late pre-term infants.¹

• AWHONN – Routine sponge bathing is NOT recommended for ill premature infants. Swaddle bathing, immersion bathing and swaddled sponge bathing are recommended bathing practices.²

• “Family involvement is key to realize the potential for long-lasting positive effects on their baby’s physical, cognitive and psychosocial development.”³

• Swaddle bathing is a “typical” activity that involves the family. Early experiences matter for brain development.⁴,⁵

• Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) – Provide supportive measures such as swaddling, decreased stimulation, supine (or others as appropriate) positioning, massage and cuddling.⁶

References

Swaddle Bathing Clinical Practice Guideline*

- Supports family centered care
- Is the least stressful form of neonatal bathing
- Conserves energy
- Enhances ability to feed after bath
- Should be routine bathing practice in hospitals

Bathe in a quiet draft-free environment

If vernix is present, leave on skin

Educate family about how to bathe

Keep bath as short as possible (7-10 min.)

Is Immersion Swaddle Bathing indicated?

Is your patient in the NICU?

<32 weeks gestation

32-33 weeks gestation

>34 weeks gestation

Healthy Infant

Routine bathing not indicated.

Delay bath for at least 2 hours or per hospital protocol

>7 days after birth

• No IV’s or lines
• Thermal and cardiorespiratory stability
• Adequate stability to be off monitors for 10+ minutes
• Breathing ambient air or on nasal cannula oxygen

Has umbilical cord fallen off?

Y

N

Immersion swaddle bath every 2-3 days using mild pH neutral cleanser

Immersion swaddle bath or shallow swaddle bath (depending on umbilical cord hospital policy) every 2-3 days using mild pH neutral cleanser

Educate family about how to bathe

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