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.  
- AWHONN- Routine sponge bathing is NOT recommended for ill premature infants. Consider swaddled immersion bathing.
- “Family involvement is key to realize the potential for long-lasting positive effects on their baby’s physical, cognitive and psychosocial development.”
- Swaddle bathing is a “typical” activity that involves the family. Early experiences matter for brain development.
- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) – Provide supportive measures such as swaddling, decreased stimulation, supine (or others as appropriate) positioning, massage and cuddling.

References

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Swaddle Bathing...
- Supports family centered care 3,7,8
- Is the least stressful form of neonatal bathing 3,7,8
- Conserves energy 7,9,10
- Enhances ability to feed after bath 7,8
- Should be routine bathing practice in hospitals 7,8,9

Bathe in a quiet draft-free environment

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

Educate family about how to bathe

If vernix is present, leave on skin

Routine bathing not indicated.

Delay bath for at least 6-24 hours or per hospital protocol.

1. Is your patient in the NICU?
   - Yes
     - <32 weeks gestation
     - 32-33 weeks gestation
     - >34 weeks gestation
   - No
     - <7 days after birth
     - >7 days after birth

2. Is Immersion Swaddle Bathing indicated?
   - Yes
     - <32 weeks gestation
     - 32-33 weeks gestation
     - >34 weeks gestation
   - No
     - Healthy Infant

3. Has umbilical cord fallen off?
   - Yes
     - Immersion swaddle bath every 2-3 days using mild pH neutral cleanser
   - No
     - Immersion swaddle bath or shallow swaddle bath (depending on umbilical cord hospital policy) every 2-3 days using mild pH neutral cleanser

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