

Skin-care basics for your new baby

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For example, bathing every other day is sufficient, expert says.

(HealthDay)—Bathing a baby and caring for the newborn's skin can intimidate new parents, an expert says.

Newborns are small, vulnerable and slippery when wet, and finding products marketed for their delicate [skin](#) can be a challenge, too, said Dr. Dawn Davis, a pediatric [dermatologist](#) at the [Mayo Clinic](#) Children's Center in Rochester, Minn.

Writing in the January issue of the *International Journal of Dermatology*, Davis offered some advice for making bath time an enjoyable experience and for keeping a newborn's skin clean and healthy.

Newborns are ready for their first bath about six hours after birth. A daily bath for a newborn is not recommended; a bath every other day is

sufficient to keep their skin clean. When it is not a bath day, it's safe to gently wipe the newborn's face and skin with a damp washcloth. It's also recommended to wipe the exterior of each eyelid from the inside to the outside corner, Davis said in a Mayo news release.

When giving a bath, it's best to immerse a newborn's entire body into a tub of water, excluding the head and neck. This helps them retain their heat during the bath. Be sure to support the baby while immersed and only a few inches of warm water is necessary for the bath, Davis advised. To prevent scalding, set the water heater thermostat to below 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Newborn skin is susceptible to irritation and infection, so washing [newborns](#) with plain water is a good idea. If you do use products, select mild, neutral-pH cleansers without dyes or fragrances. Use products sparingly and rinse them off completely.

Change diapers every two to four hours or after a baby has soiled them. It's best to use only tap water and soft cloths to clean this area, Davis said. If baby wipes are the only option, use hypoallergenic wipes without lanolin or alcohol. Periodically air-drying the area is advisable.

If a newborn develops diaper rash, use [zinc oxide](#), a paste with neutral pH that provides a barrier between the baby's skin and the acidic products of urine and stool. If the zinc oxide doesn't clear up the rash, the newborn should be seen by a health care provider, Davis said.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [baby bathing and skin care](#).

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