

Bathing

Initial Bath

Assess to ensure that the infant has a stable temperature for a minimum of 2 to 4 hours before first bath.

Use cleansing agents with neutral pH and minimal dyes or perfume.

Use standard precautions; wear gloves.

Do not completely remove vernix; allow vernix to wear off with normal care and handling.

Bathe preterm infant younger than 32 weeks in warm water only for the first week.

Routine

Decrease frequency of baths to every second or third day by daily cleansing of eye, oral, and diaper areas and pressure points.

Use pH neutral cleanser or soaps no more than two or three times a week.

Avoid rubbing skin during bathing or drying.

Immerse stable infants fully (except head) in an appropriate-size tub.

Use swaddled immersion bathing technique: Slowly unwrap after gently lowering into water for sensitive but stable infants needing assistance with motor system reactivity.

Emollients

Apply sparingly to dry, flaking, fissured areas as needed.

Choose petrolatum-based products that are free of preservatives, dyes, and perfumes.