



Bathing Your Pet

Bathing dogs is an important part of routine care. Most cats, though, won't need a bath unless they have skin problems or get something in their coat. The first thing you need to do is get your pet comfortable with the whole idea of a bath, then move on to the proper steps.

Pets with skin problems often need baths every week or two, and sometimes even more frequently. Doing it properly will make the treatment more effective.

Getting Used to a Bath



You want to avoid having your pet get scared or anxious about bath time. That means you don't grab him, stick him in the tub, and pour water all over him. Start by offering treats in the tub.

Once he's comfortable with that part, turn the water on and then off. Use the sprayer next to him. Get him used to the sound and action. Continue to give him treats and don't force him to stay at any time.

When he's comfortable with all of that, you can then get him wet. Keep the water off his head initially. If all is going well, lather him up, and finish the bath. Clean his face and skin folds with a washcloth. It's OK to give him treats at any time! You want him to associate bath time with fun.

After thoroughly rinsing, take him out and dry him off. Some pets will tolerate a hair dryer, but try that another day. Make sure he doesn't mind the sound of it first, and then get him used to it blowing on him. Use a lower setting so there's no chance of burning him.

Give him treats when you are done. You might also take him to play or give him dinner. Again, the key is to associate bath time with FUN!

This process is the same whether you have a cat or dog. However, most dogs accept baths much more readily than cats do. It may take you longer to get your cat used to the whole process. Before bathing cats, always trim the nails on all four paws. This will help protect you, just in case they get scared.

Giving the Bath

Now that your pet is used to the whole bath idea and you have restocked your supply of treats, let's talk about the actual process. First, make sure the room is warm so your pet won't be chilled.

Before even getting in the tub, brush your pet to remove loose hairs and any dirt. Put a cotton ball into each ear to absorb any water that might get in.



Put your pet into the tub. Turn on the water, check the temperature to make sure it's not too hot, and wet his coat. If your pet is itchy, make the temperature cool or tepid. Apply shampoo and lather it up. Start with a small amount of shampoo and use more if needed. Remember you have to rinse it all out later. Work the lather into skin folds and down to the skin. Use a washcloth to wipe his face and to clean skin folds if needed.

Now it's time to rinse. A sprayer will make this much easier. You must take enough time to make sure you rinse out all the shampoo. If your pet has a heavier coat it will take even longer. Run your fingers through his coat to check it. When he's completely rinsed, apply a moisturizer or conditioner if you are using it.



When he's rinsed thoroughly, take him out and towel dry him. You can use a hair dryer if he doesn't have itchy skin, otherwise, the heat will make him itchier. **Don't forget to remove the cotton balls from his ears!**

Note: If you bathe your dog outside with a hose, make sure you run the water for a while before using it if it's a sunny day. Water inside a hose sitting in the sun can get hot enough to burn your dog. Make sure the water isn't too cold either.

Medicated Shampoos

Medicated shampoos are used to treat skin problems. If your pet has a long or heavy coat, it is usually best to have them clipped short in order for a medicated shampoo to be effective. If your pet's coat is dirty or greasy, wash them first with a cleansing shampoo before using the medicated shampoo. Medicated shampoos are not cleansing shampoos.

Some medicated shampoos don't lather up as much so don't be concerned if you don't see many suds. When using a medicated shampoo you need to work the lather down to the skin and leave it in place for at least 10 minutes (use a timer).

If the face is affected by the skin problem, you need to work some of the lather there also but be careful of his eyes and mouth. Otherwise, ask your veterinarian if medicated wipes will work for your pet.

After The Bath

It's normal for dogs to rub themselves on the floor or ground after a bath. Don't allow him outside until he's completely dry if you don't want him getting dirty right away again. Cats are too dignified to do this. They will just spend the next hour grooming themselves dry.

Frequency

How often you bathe your pet is often up to you. If you think your pet is stinky, you may want to bathe him every week or two. If he gets into something gross, you definitely want to bathe him. If you are treating a medical problem, you will usually need to do it 2-3 times a week to start.