



BATHING YOUR PET AT HOME

HOW OFTEN: Bathe no more than once a month unless the pet has become dirty or needs a special medicated shampoo as directed by a veterinarian. Excessive bathing can dry out the coat and skin. Routine brushing can help keep the coat in shape between baths.

WHAT TO USE: Use shampoo formulated for pets, not people shampoo. Dog and cat shampoo is made to be gentle and not take away too much of the pet's natural skin oils. People shampoo is the wrong pH and can damage a pet's skin and coat.

WHERE: Bathe indoors, unless the weather is warm enough outside to prevent chilling your dog. Close the bathroom door to prevent escapes, and use a rubber mat in the tub to prevent slipping. Have shampoo and conditioner (if used) ready. A spray nozzle helps, but water can also be applied to the pet with a plastic bucket or pitcher.

BRUSH FIRST: Before actually starting the bath, brush your pet well to remove loose hair and mats, and any foreign debris like burrs or twigs. Bathing a matted dog will only tighten the mats more, making them impossible to brush out later. Brushing is also a good time to look for parasites and to remove any ticks. Remove the pet's regular collar. If you have a hard time holding onto your dog or cat in the tub, use a nylon collar or grooming noose attached to a suction base to keep your pet in the tub.

BATHING: Put cotton balls in the ears to prevent water from getting in the ear canal. You can apply a drop of mineral oil to the pet's eyes if you wish to protect the corneas should shampoo get in the eyes.

Wet the pet first with plain warm water. This will help with distribution of shampoo and will remove some of the dirt caught in the coat. Apply a small amount of shampoo with your hands or on a sponge on the top of the head and around the face, being careful not to get any shampoo too close to the eyes or in the ears. Apply a thin stripe of shampoo down the back, which can be worked into the coat on the back and sides of the pet. You may need to add more shampoo with your hands on the legs and belly.

Rinse out all shampoo until no suds are left and the water runs clear. If the pet is extremely dirty, two baths may be necessary. Use cotton or pet towels to soak up most of the water from the coat. Then stand back—dogs will shake to remove even more water.

DRYING: On a warm day, your dog can run around the yard. Special pet dryers are available, which are safer than using a human blow dryer (most of which are too hot to use on a pet's skin). For a fluffy look, brush your pet while aiming the dryer at the area. Cats may tolerate a dryer if they are used to being groomed; otherwise, soak up as much water as possible from the coat and let your cat air dry in a confined area (or else you may end up with wet carpeting and bedding).