

bathing your dog

canine health

Bathing is rarely a favorite pastime for dogs or pet parents, but every dog can benefit from an occasional bath. Introduce bathing early and slowly. Some dogs learn to enjoy their baths, and almost all of them can learn to tolerate them.

Brush first:

Long-haired or double-coated dogs need to have the mats or excess loose hair brushed out of their coats before bathing. Otherwise, the mats become tighter and more difficult to remove. Refer to Petco's Grooming Your Dog Care Sheet for information on brushing your dog.

Where to bathe:

If the weather is nice and your pet is healthy, bathing outside with the hose in a big tub works. Dog grooming tubs are available and some include a convenient nozzle for rinsing. Larger dogs can stand on the ground while you bathe them. Make sure to have a collar and leash on them so they don't get away. Indoors, a shower with a handheld shower head is the easiest. Bathing a dog in a regular bath tub is messy and often hard on your back. Small dogs can be bathed in a kitchen sink. A self-serve dog wash is available at select Petco locations, which allows you to wash your dog in a professional grooming tub and leave the mess behind.

Supplies needed:

- Waterproof collar and leash
- Towels
- Treats
- Cotton balls
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Brush and or comb
- Non-slip surface
- Ear cleaner



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

Before the bath:

Collect and prepare your supplies and cover the bottom of the bathing area with a non-slip surface such as a bath mat. Make certain the sink, tub or shower is clean and free of soap or other residue. Select a shampoo that is suited to your dog's coat. There are special products for white dogs, soothing ones for dry skin, flea shampoos and conditioners for dry coats and more. If you are using a spot-on flea product, avoid flea dips or flea shampoos. Check the label of the flea repellent you use to see if shampoo washes it out. You may need to re-apply it once your dog's coat is dry. Make sure to leash your dog so they can't escape. Using the ear cleaner, gently wipe around the perimeter of the ear. Do not go down into the ear canal as you risk injuring your dog. Let your dog shake their head a few times and put cotton balls in both ears to help prevent water from getting down into the canal.

The bath:

To bathe your dog, start at the back of the dog and work forward, as this will help them get used to the water before you get to the head. Soak your dog's coat with tepid—not hot—water. You will need good water pressure to reach the skin and thoroughly wet the coat of a long-haired dog.

Once thoroughly soaked, start at the tail area with shampoo and follow the manufacturer's dilution recommendations; too much shampoo can be harmful if used at full strength. Work up a good lather, being careful to avoid ears and eyes as you move toward the front of your dog's body. Following label directions, leave flea or skin conditioning shampoos on for several minutes.

Starting at the head this time, thoroughly rinse until no more shampoo washes out and the water runs clear. If you leave shampoo in the coat, it can cause dullness and skin irritation.

When all shampoo is out of the coat, condition your dog if necessary and rinse thoroughly again, removing the cotton balls from

your dog's ears. Use a towel to dry your dog's skin and coat. Use the recommended brush to brush out the coat; for long-haired breeds this will separate the coat, helping it dry quicker, and for all dogs it will help to pull the moisture out of the skin and redistribute your pet's natural oils. Long-haired dogs may need blowing out with a hair dryer on the cool setting.

Be sure the dryer is not hot or too close to your dog's skin or ears. Introduce the hair dryer to your dog slowly if they are not familiar with it, starting at the back end of your dog. Don't leave your dog in a crate with the dryer blowing on them, as it will quickly get too hot. Leave this method to the professionals who have specially made dryers.

On a nice day, air-drying outside is fine as long as your pet has shade; otherwise, try indoor air-drying on a towel in your dog's crate. Keep in mind that if you air-dry outdoors, your dog may head straight for the grass and roll around in it.

Cleaning the ears:

Always dry out your dog's ears after a bath. Dry with a pad. Never put anything smaller than a finger down your dog's ears. Cotton swabs can push dirt and debris deeper into the ear canal, and could even puncture an eardrum.

Floppy-eared dogs, especially cocker spaniels, labrador retrievers and golden retrievers are prone to ear infections. If your dog swims regularly, dry out their ears after swimming.

If the ears smell or are excessively dirty, a trip to the veterinarian is in order. Regular maintenance on your part will help prevent infections and keep your dog's ears healthy. Products specifically designed for ear washing are available at Petco. Follow label directions and don't forget to dry the ears after cleaning them.

