

How Often Should You Be Bathing Your Dog?

Bathing your pup isn't just about making them smell nice — it's an important part of their health care. Find out how often you should bathe them and why overbathing can also harm their well-being.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dog baths are more than just about smell; they help keep your pup's skin healthy, remove allergens and parasites, and protect their largest organ — the skin
- Short-haired dogs need fewer baths, while oily, long-haired, and hairless breeds often require weekly or monthly cleaning
- Your dog's lifestyle matters — active, outdoor dogs or those that swim often need more frequent baths, while indoor loungers may only need a bath every few months
- Dogs with allergies, sensitive skin, or infections may need special shampoos or vet-approved schedules to prevent further irritation
- Overbathing can harm your dog. Look out for dry, flaky skin and a dull coat, and use dog-safe shampoo

There's nothing better than cozying up with your dog on the couch until you catch a whiff of something funky, and it turns out to be your furry friend. That odor is one of the first signs that it's time for a bath.

But how often should you be bathing your dog? Is there a required amount of time in between baths? Read this article to understand better why dog bathing matters, how often you should bathe your dog according to specific factors, and find tips to make bath time easier and hassle-free for you and your furry friend.

Why Bathing Your Dog Is Important

Bathing your dog does more than freshen up their scent; it also helps keep their skin clean and healthy. Just like humans, your dog's skin is their largest organ; giving them regular baths keeps their skin (and fur) strong and healthy.

Aside from eliminating dirt, irritants, bacteria, and parasites, regular bathing removes loose hair, dead skin, and allergens. Bathing also helps remove the excess fur among dogs that shed frequently.

So now the question is — how often should you bathe your dog? Believe it or not, the answer differs from one dog to another, because certain factors affect your dog's need for baths, mainly their:

- Lifestyle and activity level
- Coat

- Breed
- Skin conditions or health problems

Their Coat Type Makes a Big Difference

Your dog's coat greatly affects how often they need a bath. Here's a basic guide to help you out:¹

- **Short-haired dogs** — Boxers or Dachshunds usually don't need frequent baths. Every two to three months is enough unless they get dirty or start to smell.
- **Long-haired dogs** — Breeds like Shih Tzus and Collies have long coats that can tangle and trap dirt. They often need a bath every four to six weeks.
- **Double-coated dogs** — Golden Retrievers and Huskies shed a lot. Their thick coats help naturally remove dead skin and debris. They only need a bath every one to three months unless they get filthy.

However, having fewer or more fur is not always as simple. The American Kennel Club notes that hairless breeds like the Chinese Crested and Xoloitzcuintli need weekly baths with a gentle shampoo, requiring more care than other breeds. Without fur to protect their skin, they're more exposed to bacteria and dirt, which can clog pores and cause breakouts.²

Your pet's age also affects their bath time frequency. Note that regardless of breed, senior dogs may have different needs, so always assess their condition and energy levels. Only bathe puppies when needed — for example, if they smell or step in their poop or pee. Avoid bathing newborn pups altogether.³

Your Dog's Daily Routine Also Affects How Often They Need a Bath

When humans work out often or spend a lot of time outdoors, sweating and getting dirty, it's only natural for them to bathe more frequently. The same logic applies to pets. Miguel Garcia, chief groomer at Central Bark Fort Lauderdale in Florida, says that "Activity level should be the prime factor in determining how often you bathe your dog."⁴

Dogs that live mostly indoors stay cleaner and need fewer baths, while outdoor dogs pick up more dirt and might need a bath every few weeks. If your pup is a regular at the dog park, goes on hikes, or loves swimming, you may need to bathe them more often. Bathe them after messy activities like rolling in mud or swimming in salty water.

If Your Dog Has Health and Skin Conditions, It Can Also Affect How Often They Should Bathe

Dogs with specific health issues may need a different bathing routine. For example, frequent baths can make dogs with sensitive or dry, itchy skin worse. Limit bath times to once every six to eight weeks and use a moisturizing or hypoallergenic natural shampoo for dogs.

If your dog frequently gets skin infections, your vet may prescribe a medicated shampoo; follow their recommendations on how frequently to use it. Some dogs may need baths twice a week until their skin improves.

Dogs with fleas or ticks may need a specific shampoo as well. Consult with your vet and follow the schedule and instructions carefully to ensure the treatment works.

Can You Bathe Your Dog Too Much?

So, is there such a thing as overbathing your dog? There is. Experts often advise humans not to wash or shampoo their hair daily, since doing so strips away the natural oils. The same concept applies to dogs.

According to Be Chewy, "[W]ashing dogs too often can cause dryness and irritation by minimizing natural oils on their skin. It's possible to create skin problems that wouldn't otherwise exist with too-frequent baths."⁵ Signs that you're bathing your dog too much include flaky skin, dull coat, and excessive scratching.

If you notice these, cut back on baths and talk to your vet. Using a conditioner after shampooing can also help replace lost moisture. It's also important to use shampoos made for dogs, as human shampoos can upset the pH balance of their skin.

Additional Bath Time Tips

Many dogs (and some pet parents) find bath time stressful and difficult, so they often leave it until the last minute. However, if you prepare properly, bath time can be easy, even fun. Follow these steps:

1. **Prepare your supply** — Essentials include dog shampoo, a towel, a brush, and a nonslip mat. You can also prepare a dog-safe hair dryer.
2. **Brush your pet's coat before the bath** — This will help detangle and remove any mats.
3. **Use lukewarm water — not too hot or cold** — You can bathe your dog in the shower or bathtub, or even use an outdoor hose (if the weather is nice).
4. **Wet your dog completely, then lather with dog shampoo** — Avoid the eyes and ears. Rinse thoroughly to prevent itching.
5. **Dry with a towel or blow dryer, brushing their fur** to keep their coat smooth and tangle-free.
6. **Check their ears and trim nails** if needed.

Another helpful tip is to have treats ready nearby to reward your dog's good behavior. Treats will also make it a positive experience for them. In addition, make it a habit to brush your dog's coat in between baths. Brushing eliminates loose hair, dirt, and debris and helps spread natural oils, keeping your dog's coat shiny and healthy. You may need to brush long-haired dogs daily, while you can brush short-haired breeds less frequently.

Bathing Your Dog Doesn't Have To Be a Chore

Whether your dog loves bath time or tolerates it, turning it into a regular part of your care routine will benefit both of you. For more helpful tips, read "[**Is Your Dog's Grooming Routine Up to Standard?**](#)"

If you're unsure how often to bathe your dog, your veterinarian is your best resource. Consult them for useful tips on keeping your pup looking, feeling, and smelling great year-round. You'll know what to do the next time you notice your furry friend smelling less than fresh.

Sources and References

¹[Pethood, January 7, 2025.](#)

²[American Kennel Club, February 23, 2023](#)

^{3,4,5}[Be Chewy, August 1, 2024](#)

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