

Is Your Dog's Grooming Routine Up to Standard?

A clean pet is a happy, healthy pet — but there's more to grooming than just regular baths. Here are a few important pointers to help you keep your canine friend clean and smelling good all the time.

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Regular grooming goes beyond bathing — it's a complete physical evaluation that strengthens your bond with your pet and helps them become comfortable with being handled
- Bathing frequency depends on your dog's breed and lifestyle; over-bathing can strip the natural oils from their skin. Use mild shampoos, protect ears/eyes and ensure proper drying based on coat type
- Regular brushing removes dead hair, spreads natural oils, prevents matting in long-haired breeds, and allows you to check for skin issues like lumps, rashes or parasites
- Nail trimming is essential to prevent discomfort and walking problems, while regular ear cleaning helps prevent infections, especially in floppy-eared breeds and water-loving dogs
- Dental hygiene through regular tooth brushing is crucial to prevent plaque, tartar buildup and gum disease, which can lead to serious health issues and expensive treatments

Having regular grooming sessions for your dog is a crucial part of pet ownership. Imagine not washing your hair or going for a shower for a few days — it's downright uncomfortable, right? While dogs may not need to be bathed as frequently as humans do, making sure to do it on a regular basis ensures they stay healthy, clean and comfortable always.

However, grooming a dog is more than just giving them a bath, although this is at the top of the list. Grooming involves a complete evaluation of their physical state, from head to their paws to their tail. It can be a positive bonding experience for the two of you, strengthening your relationship and building trust and affection.

Benefits of Regular Grooming Sessions

Grooming is also a great way to show your pet you care — while some dogs may not enjoy being groomed, others love the attention and care they get during these sessions, helping boost their mood and improve their behavior.

According to Betty's Best blog:

"If you're rushing or stressed during a grooming session, your animal will feel it. Do your best to brush and bathe him when you've got plenty of time and patience. Dedicate the entire span of time to him and him alone, and be fully present. Zoning out can result in silly mistakes that will cause him stress and make him dread your next session."

Remember, your animal's well-being is riding on the experiences he has — and it's up to you to make them as positive as possible. Take care when grooming him, and watch how he thrives!"¹

Another advantage of regular grooming is it allows your dog to become used to being handled – this can be useful especially if you bring them to a pet grooming salon, to the vet or even if they meet new people.

So how should you get started with properly grooming your dog? Below are a few pointers to help you out.

Bathing Tips to Keep in Mind

There are some factors you need to consider when giving your dog a bath; here are helpful strategies to remember:

- **Frequency of bathtimes** — This depends on your dog's breed, coat type and lifestyle. Some dogs may need bathing once or twice a week, while others are fine with baths every couple of months.

Some people think they need to bathe their dog as often as possible, but this isn't always the right thing to do, as it could end up stripping their skin of its natural oils that help prevent dryness and flaking, and keep their skin barrier intact.

Here's a more helpful gauge — if your dog looks or smells like they need a bath, then they probably need one. Bathing not only removes dirt, allergens and parasites from your dog's body, but it also soothes sensitive skin as well.²

- **The type of shampoo** — Make sure to use an all-natural shampoo that uses mild ingredients. Tea tree shampoo works great for dogs with skin infections, while medicated shampoo may be ideal for dogs with fleas or ticks.
- **Protect their ears and eyes** — Dogs don't like having water sprayed or poured over their heads, as moisture could enter their ear canal and cause them to develop ear infections. Avoid lathering the shampoo on your dog's head as well, as the shampoo can accidentally irritate their eyes.
- **Drying your dog after bathing** — Short-haired breeds may just need a good towel drying and a few shakes to get dry, but long-haired breeds and those with dense coats may need both towel-drying and blow-drying.

Tips for a Stress-Free Bathtime

Most pets (and some pet owners) dislike bathtime — often causing stress and anxiety in both parties. However, bathtime doesn't have to be stressful – here are some tips to remember:

- **Give your pet a good brushing before the bath** — This will remove debris, dead hair and mats from their coat. If your dog loves to be brushed, this will help relax and soothe them before the bath.
- **Prepare your bath supplies and bath area** — Have your shampoo, clean towel, hairdryer before you begin. Some dogs become stressed when bathing in tubs. If you have a small dog, try washing them in the laundry room or your kitchen sink. For large dogs, try giving them a bath outside if the weather is warm and nice.
- **Keep the water temperature comfortable** — It shouldn't be too hot or too cold. Putting a towel down on the bottom of the tub also makes your dog more secure and gives them better footing (as opposed to the slippery ceramic surface).

- **Lather from the front to the back** — Your dog should be completely wet before you start applying shampoo to make lathering or rinsing easier. Lather their back and sides, underside, armpits, legs and paws. Don't miss the area under their neck, backside, groin area and tail as well.
- **Rinse them thoroughly** — Use a washcloth to clean her face and around her eyes. Make sure to wring as much water as you can from their coat before lifting them from the tub and allowing them to shake.

Grooming Their Skin, Coat and Nails

Aside from bathing, regularly grooming your dog helps ensure that their skin and coat stay healthy. Make sure to set aside time to brush your pet's hair, especially if you have a medium- or long-haired breed. Brushing not only eliminates dead hair, dandruff and dirt from your pet's body, but it also allows natural oils to spread throughout their fur.

Brushing also removes knots and tangles. In long-haired breeds, this is essential to prevent painful matting that can cause discomfort.

Grooming your pet also allows you to check for any visible signs of health problems. Take the time to check their skin for lumps, bumps, rashes and parasites like ticks and fleas. This will help you to prevent them from progressing into something more serious.

As for their nails, they usually need proper trimming — overgrown nails can be quite uncomfortable and will affect how they walk or run. Long nails can curl back into the paw pads and cause pain and infection.³

Don't Forget to Clean Their Teeth and Ears, Too

Make it a point to peer and check your dog's ears regularly to ensure they are free of excess wax and debris. Breeds with floppy ears or dogs that are prone to infections need regular ear cleanings to avoid worsening their condition.

As mentioned, bathtime can lead to trapped moisture in their ears. Dogs that love to swim or spend time in the water are also prone to infections, so make sure to dry them properly and to check regularly for trapped moisture.

As for their oral health, make sure to brush your dog's teeth regularly to prevent plaque and tartar buildup that can cause tooth decay, gum disease and bad breath. Dental problems in dogs can lead to pain and costly procedures in the future, so make sure to include toothbrushing in your grooming routine.

Sources and References

¹ [Betty's Best, February 21, 2020](#)

^{2,3} [Good Dog People, October 11, 2024](#)