

# Shampoo therapy has been recommended for your dog...

...because medicated bathing is one of the safest and most effective ways to treat the skin. Shampoo therapy needs to be done correctly for its full benefits to be realized, so the Canadian Academy of Veterinary Dermatology would like to help you do it right.



Canadian Academy of  
Veterinary Dermatology

Académie Canadienne de  
Dermatologie Vétérinaire



## How often do I need to shampoo my dog?

To combat an active infection, your veterinarian might ask you to bathe your dog several times a week, even daily at first. The frequency is reduced over time. While pet owners are often concerned about drying out their dog's skin by frequent bathing, this is rarely an issue when using shampoos and topical therapies as prescribed.

## What's in a medicated shampoo?

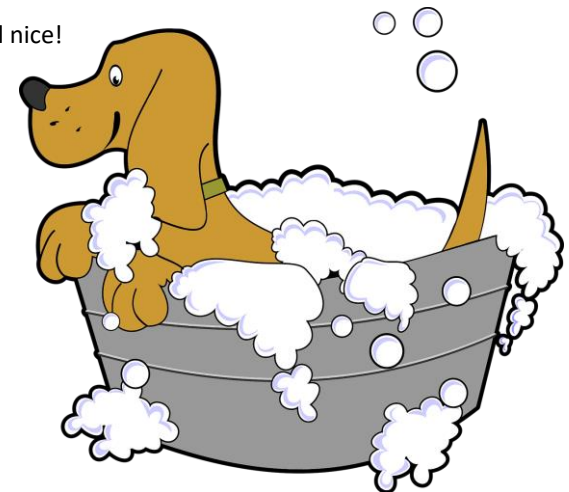
In addition to ingredients that clean the skin and coat, it can include one or more of the following:

- **Antimicrobial** ingredients that reduce skin bacteria and/or yeast.
- **Anti-itch** or **anti-inflammatory** ingredients that help to make dogs more comfortable.
- **Moisturizers** and **emollients** that help to repair the skin barrier.
- **Anti-seborrheic** ingredients that help reduce dry, flaky skin.

## What are the benefits of shampoo therapy?

Shampoos directly target the skin, the area we want to reach. They are generally very safe and can be very effective at managing a variety of skin conditions. Shampoo therapy can be used to:

- Treat and prevent **skin infections**, reducing or eliminating the need for antibiotics.
- Remove **crusts, dandruff**, and other accumulated material.
- Reduce the amount of **hair and debris** shed in the home (though immediately after a bath you might notice increased shedding).
- Remove **allergens** from the skin of allergic dogs. These environmental substances, such as house dust mites and pollens, are absorbed through the skin.
- Reduce **itching and inflammation**, and physically soothe the skin.
- Improve the **health** and **barrier function** of the skin to prevent entry of allergens and microbes.
- Make your dog look and smell nice!



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## How do I use a medicated shampoo?

1. **Prepare the bathing area.** While we use the word “bath”, you are actually giving your dog a shower. This can be done at home in a tub, walk-in shower, or sink depending on the size of your dog. A hand-held shower nozzle or jug can be used. A non-slip mat will make your dog more secure. As an alternative, there are self-serve dog washes in many communities.
2. **Wet your dog** using cool water, then **apply the shampoo.** Lather the shampoo into the most severely affected areas first (e.g. the belly and feet) and then the rest of the skin. Use enough shampoo to work up a nice lather all over the coat. Hint: A quarter sized area of shampoo will do about 2 hands worth of body area.
3. **WAIT.** Shampoos have a required contact time (often 5 to 10 minutes, as directed by your veterinarian) to be effective. Start timing from the end of the shampoo application.
4. **Continuously massage the skin** to help lift debris and scabs. This can be quality bonding time for you and your pet!
5. **Rinse well** using **cool or lukewarm** water.
6. **Towel-dry.**
7. Apply any after-bath **spray, rinse, or conditioner** that has been recommended. Rinse and towel-dry again if it is not a leave-in product. Gently comb long-haired dogs to prevent matting.
8. Allow your dog to **air-dry**, avoid warm hairdryers.
9. **Between baths**, use any sprays, mousses, or wipes as prescribed.



## Bathing tips:

- For very hairy dogs, consider **professional grooming** to clip the hair short.
- If your dog is very greasy, dirty, or crusty, we recommend **pre-washing** with a non-medicated shampoo to remove this material. This reduces the amount of medicated shampoo needed to create a good lather.
- Start with **most severely affected areas** to increase the contact time in these areas.
- Always use **cool or lukewarm** water and then towel dry. Warm water and hot air can dry and irritate the skin. Use the cool setting if using a dryer.
- Use a timer – 5 to 10 minutes can feel longer than you think!
- Don't forget **treats and praise!** Make bath time a positive experience. Most dogs can learn to tolerate and even enjoy baths. Ask your veterinary team what treats can be used if your dog has allergies.
- Avoid standing water at the bottom of the tub. This makes medicated shampoos ineffective on the feet, where they are often needed. A “medicated bath” is not really meant to be a bath: it is a **shower!**
- Make sure to wash the spaces between your dog's **toes**, top and bottom.
- In summer months, **outdoor baths** using a garden hose can be a pleasant alternative (but check water temperature first!).
- Keep water out of your dog's **eyes, ears and nose** during the bath. Bath time is a good time to clean his ears, if needed. Use only prescribed cleansers, not bathwater!
- If your dog sees a professional **groomer**, send him with your products and instructions to use only cool water and drying.
- After bathing, some dogs like to throw themselves on the ground, roll around, and act goofy. This is not a sign of itching, just a **normal dog behaviour**. If your dog is outdoors, make sure to keep him out of dirt and leaf piles after the bath!
- Although rare, **adverse reactions** to topical therapies are possible. Always contact your veterinarian if your pet's skin worsens after bathing, or if you have any other concerns.
- Shampoo therapy is not possible for every owner and pet. If you have concerns about your ability to bathe your dog for any reason, please share these with your **veterinary team**.