

# Having a Sitz Bath at Home



UHN

## What is a Sitz Bath?

A sitz bath is a warm soothing soaking of your bottom (vaginal/scrotal, anal, perineal areas of the body) in warm water. Baking Soda (Sodium bicarbonate) or salt can be added to the water. Baking Soda or salt can be purchased in a drug or grocery store.

## Why Do I Need to Have a Sitz Bath?

A sitz bath is often recommended for people who have irritation to their bottom, which may result in ulcerated, cracked, raw or blistered skin. This irritation may be caused by a variety of things such as; diarrhea, hemorrhoids, surgery, radiation and chemotherapy.

A sitz bath cleanses, decreasing the risk of infection, and soothes the skin. The circulation is increased which promotes healing. Having a sitz bath usually makes a person feel more comfortable.



## How Often Should I Have a Sitz Bath?

This depends on the reason for the sitz bath. As a general guideline, try to take a sitz bath 4 times a day. A sitz bath can be done more or less often depending on your comfort. For example, some people have a sitz bath after each bowel movement if their anal area is very sore. Your nurse or doctor can tell you what is best for you.

## How Do I Take a Sitz Bath?

There are two ways you can take a sitz bath. You may use your bathtub at home or you may use a plastic sitz bath that fits onto a toilet. Sitz baths are available in the hospital or at your local drug store.

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## Toilet Method with a Plastic Sitz Bath

1. Rinse the sitz bath to remove any soap or salt residue.
2. Lift the toilet seat and put the plastic sitz bath in the toilet bowl.
3. Fill the plastic sitz bath two-thirds (2/3) full with warm water, not hot (37 to 39°C or 99 to 102°F). If the water feels too warm on your wrist, it is too hot to sit in.
4. Add (5 to 15mL) 1/2 – 1 tablespoon of baking soda or (5-10mL) 1–2 teaspoons of salt to the water in the plastic sitz bath and swirl the water till the baking soda or salt is dissolved.
5. Carefully sit down in the plastic sitz bath and soak your bottom/perianal area for 10 to 15 minutes. As you sit down, the excess water will run into the toilet through the openings in the plastic sitz bath.
6. When finished dry your bottom by patting the area with a clean lint free towel. At home another way to dry the area is to use a blow dryer set on low or use a hand-held fan. You could also lie down and rest as the area dries.
7. Try and leave your bottom open to the air as much as possible. Use cotton underwear with no elastic in the legs. Oversized boxes shorts are great.
8. The plastic sitz bath should be cleaned after each use.



## Bathtub Method

1. Rinse the bathtub before use to remove any soap or salt residue.
2. Fill the bathtub with enough warm water to cover your thighs, about (13 cms) or 5 inches deep.
3. The temperature of the water should be warm, not hot (37-39°C or 99-120°F). If the water feels too warm on your wrist, it is too hot to sit in.
4. Add 1/2 cup (125mL ) of baking soda or 1/4 cup (75mL) of salt to the bath water and swirl the water until the baking soda or salt is dissolved.



5. Carefully enter the bath, sit down and soak your bottom for 10 to 15 minutes. Lean backwards, rather than sitting directly on your bottom, in the tub to allow the water to reach all areas.
6. When finished get out of the bath and dry your bottom by patting the area with a clean towel. At home another way to dry the area is to use a blow dryer set on low or use a hand-held fan. You could also lie down and rest as the area dries.
7. Try and leave your bottom open to the air as much as possible. Use cotton underwear with no elastic in the legs. Oversized boxer shorts are great.
8. The bathtub should be cleaned after each use.

### **Can I Use the Soap and Lotion I Normally Use on my Skin?**

Yes, for most “bottoms” this would be fine. However, if your skin has raw areas or the skin is broken, then you should speak with your **nurse** or doctor about which soaps and lotions you can use. If you are on radiation treatment your doctor, nurse, or radiation therapist will give you specific advice.

### **If My Doctor has Prescribed Hydrocortisone Cream or other Ointments such as Flamazine or Zinc and Castor Oil — What Then?**

You may use the cream or ointment after drying the skin—even on broken or cracked skin. Use the cream or ointment liberally as often as necessary to keep comfortable. You will be using the cream or ointment for a short time and the amount absorbed will not hurt you. (The note on the jar or tube which says: “use sparingly” is a guideline for a person using the cream or ointment for a long period of time).

### **What if there is Some Bleeding or Discharge?**

Irritated areas often leak fluid as they heal, as part of the healing process. Clear whitish fluid and blood streaks or specks are common. If you are having heavy bleeding or bad smelling fluid, then tell this to your nurse or doctor. Fevers and swollen, reddened areas also need to be reported as this may signal an infection.

### **Should I Stop Having Sexual Intercourse While Needing Sitz Baths?**

No, unless you have been advised to avoid sexual intercourse. If intercourse is uncomfortable or painful, check with your nurse or doctor, they can advise you.

**TIP #1. Try a new fashion look. Wear a skirt, kilt, sarong, or caftan and leave the underwear off.**

**TIP #2. Use cotton underwear with no elastic in the legs. Oversized boxer shorts are great.**

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