Delaying the Newborn’s First Bath to Enhance Neonatal Stability
Ogechi Anyanwu, BS; Risa Hoffman, BS; Lorin Meynard, BS
University of Houston Second Degree BSN Program 2019

PICOT Question
In newborns, how does delaying the first bath to after the first 24 hours of life compared to bathing within 6 hours after delivery influence optimal neonatal stability of thermoregulation, glucose control, and breastfeeding?

P: Newborn
I: Delayed Bathing After the First 24 Hours of Life
C: Versus Bathing Within the First 6 Hours After Delivery
O: Enhanced Neonatal Stability

Review of Literature
Databases used:
- PubMed
- AWHONN
- Google Scholar
- Science Direct

Keywords searched:
- neonatal thermoregulation
- delayed infant bathing
- essential newborn care
- newborn hypoglycemia
- exclusive breastfeeding
- evidence-based newborn care

Article selection criteria:
- peer reviewed articles
- published within last 5 years (2014-2019)

Background
A newborn’s inability to self regulate their temperature places them at risk of many complications, including hypothermia, hypoglycemia and infection, therefore proper initiation of newborn interventions are vital to ensuring early stabilization after birth. The current standard of practice is bathing newborns as early as 6 hours after birth, however WHO recommends delaying infant bathing to after the 24 hours of life can be very beneficial in the transition to extrauterine life. Delaying the infant’s first bath also shown to support early initiation of breastfeeding by providing uninterrupted skin-to-skin and bonding time. Since infant bathing directly impacts thermoregulation, establishing evidence-based practice on the best time to give the first bath is critical in promoting optimal neonatal health.

Synthesis of Findings
- Interventions to reduce infection-related newborn mortality include drying, skin-to-skin contact, breastfeeding initiation and delayed bathing1,4,6
- Vernix caseosa should remain on the newborn for as long as possible because it has many beneficial properties, such as acting as a temperature regulator, antioxidant and safe antimicrobial for the baby1,2,3,4,5,6
- Components of the amniotic fluid have been found to act as a sensory cue for breastfeeding initiation by guiding the newborn to the breast3
- Delaying a newborn’s first bath at least 13.5 hours increased the odds of exclusive breastfeeding by 39% compared with those newborns who were bathed at 2.4 hours2,3
- Delaying newborn bathing to after 24 hours of birth showed a statistically significant decrease in blood sugar checks below 45 mg/dL compared to no delay in the first bath2,3
- It is believed that delaying the bath reduced the amount of cold stress events; When newborns are cold-stressed, an increased metabolic rate is required to generate warmth, thus decreasing their glucose stores causing hypoglycemia1,2,3,4

References


Acknowledgements
We would like to thank Dr. Lenora McWilliams, PhD, MS, RN and Dr. Cheryl Brohard, PhD, RN, CNE, ONC, AOCN®, CHPCA® for their mentorship on this poster. We would also like to thank the George and Vivian L. Smith Foundations for providing academic scholarships.