

Dear Dr. Wise: How often should I bathe my indoor dog?

As dog lovers, we all tolerate a little hair around the house. However, most dog owners also appreciate a fresh, clean, fluffy dog. Sorting out how often to bathe your dog and what shampoo to use can be daunting with the number of products that are available on shelves these days. Let's start examining a few factors to consider when thinking about a bathing regime for an indoor dog.

For routine bathing, it's wise to consider the breed of your dog, the environment you live in, and any dermatologic conditions they may have. All dogs produce natural skin oils important for maintaining both skin and hair health. The advancements of shampoos made specifically for dogs now allows bathing as often as needed without worrying about stripping the skin and hair of natural oils. However, just like with us, there is a wide variety of skin types and those with oily skin can withstand bathing more frequently than those with dry skin. Brushing can also decrease the need for bathing by helping to distribute skin oils, collect loose hair, and rid the coat of dust and dirt. Climate is another factor to consider when determining how often to bathe your dog. Warmer climates with high humidity often increase the need for more regular bathing. Dermatologic conditions including fleas, mites, allergies, and dander can be treated with the help of your local veterinarian. Most indoor dogs with healthy skin and coat can be bathed as needed every 4-8 weeks.

Remember that your local veterinarian is the best resource to help formulate a plan for you and your dog. They'll be able to recommend the best shampoo for your dog's needs and help figure out how often to bathe.