

Swaddle Baths Provide Comfort for Baby and Mom

Newborn Addie Evans recently experienced an immersion swaddle bath at OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center in Bloomington. The baby girl rarely stirred while it was happening, which was a far cry from what her mom, Joey Evans, experienced with her two other daughters.

“This one was a lot different,” said Evans. “She was actually kind of quiet through the entire bathing process.”

The staff at the OSF St. Joseph Birthing Center has already been recommending delayed bathing for newborns for more than two years now. It was found that the stress of an immediate bath could sometimes drop a baby’s sugar levels and severely increase the newborn’s stress levels. According to Birthing Center manager Renell Composto, the new immersion swaddle technique is another way to cut that stress, both for baby and mom.

“We started with delaying bathing at least eight hours, sometimes longer if parents were fine with that, and then this was just the next step to again provide the babies with a more comfortable environment, and moms to be a little bit more content with kind of the stressful event of bathing a baby. They typically cry and scream and don’t really always enjoy it, and we hope that this would provide some alleviation of that,” said Composto.

Evans agreed, reflecting on her feelings while she watched her first baby get bathed right after the newborn arrived.

“I think from watching your very first get bathed and having them scream and cry, all you want to do is just pick them up and hold them and make them not scream and cry anymore and you feel like you’re the only one that can do that,” recalled Evans. “So to actually watch them be bathed in a tub, not crying and actually enjoy it made me enjoy it.”

Composto says there is a reason for that. The swaddle used in immersion bathing helps the newborn feel secure. Plus the process, which involves unwrapping, washing and then re-wrapping the baby bit-by-bit and limb-by-limb, is warm and relaxing, rather than stress-inducing.

“It keeps the baby swaddled tightly, which of course they love from being inside mom for such a long time, and then it’s not as much of a sudden change,” explained Composto. “The water is at a great temperature and it’s done a little slower just to make them more comfortable and yet get the job done.”

OSF St. Joseph birthing center staff also use baby’s first bath as an educational opportunity, encouraging the whole family, including older siblings to take part.

Composto says the addition of the immersion swaddle bath to the Birthing Center’s standards of care makes sense.

“It’s what evidence says is best practice, and like many of the other things we’ve been doing, it just kind of goes along with providing the mom and babies the best evidence-based care we can,” she said.

The Birthing Center at OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center is the only birthing center in the Bloomington area to earn a [Baby Friendly](#) designation. To learn more or to take a tour, click [here](#) or call (309) 665-4703.