

## Rat Grooming Tips

**Use these tips when your rat needs grooming assistance.**

*By Audrey Pavia*

Posted: March 31, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Rats are fastidiously clean animals. They spend nearly 30 percent of their active hours grooming and cleaning themselves. Therefore, you usually do not need to shampoo or bathe them. Some pet rats, usually males, may have a visibly dirty tail or oily hair. Some may have a urine odor to them. In these cases, you can occasionally bathe your rat with puppy or kitten shampoo. Never use baby shampoo or any other kind of shampoo for humans because it can cause skin irritation.

If your rat has an excessively dirty tail, use a soft toothbrush and puppy shampoo to clean it. Gently stroke the rat's tail with the damp toothbrush. Be sure to brush away from the rat's body so you don't harm the delicate skin structure of your rat's tail. Be mindful of not brushing your pet too hard since it may harm the skin.

You may need to clip your rat's toenails. You'll know the nails need clipping if your rat is inadvertently scratching your skin when you handle it.

Your rat's teeth do not need to be cleaned, but provide your rat with chew toys to allow the teeth to wear down naturally.

Be certain to seek out a vet experienced with rat anatomy or find an experienced rat owner to assist you with nail trimming. Have a styptic pencil or styptic powder at the ready should you accidentally nick or cut the quick, which is the small vein that runs inside the rat's toenails.