START HERE / SAFETY FIRST

Soak & Reflect

A simple evening self-care guide. A warm bath or shower, followed by a few quiet lines in your journal. Optional self-care, not a treatment for anxiety or sleep problems.

Before you begin

Plain warm water is enough

Use warm, not hot, water. Keep enough light to move safely and the floor dry. Get out carefully if you feel too hot, dizzy or unwell.

Epsom salts are optional

Epsom salt is magnesium sulphate. Evidence for meaningful absorption through bathwater is lacking; added salts have no proven sleep benefit.[2] Follow bath-use label directions; never swallow salts for this ritual. Avoid Epsom baths with open wounds, skin infections, severe inflammation or burns.[2] With diabetes, ask your doctor before warm soaks. Stop for redness, irritation or swelling.[5]

Scent and carrier oils

Never add essential-oil drops straight to water or salts. A carrier oil can dilute essential oil for skin, but does not make it disperse in water. Do not make a bath blend for this ritual. Choose a properly formulated bath product used as directed, or no scent. For skin, use a labelled, pre-diluted product; never undiluted essential oil.[3]

New product? Test on earlier days

Before first use, test a coin-sized inner-arm spot twice daily for 7-10 days, using the normal amount and contact time. Rinse wash-off products as directed. Never test bath concentrates neat. Wash off and stop for a reaction; a clear test is not a guarantee.[4]

If you are pregnant

Keep the bath warm, no hotter than 37°C or as advised by your maternity clinician; use a thermometer. Avoid overheating, hot tubs, saunas and steam rooms. Leave essential oils out of your bath.[6] Ask your maternity clinician before using Epsom salts.[5]

If you are breastfeeding

Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using Epsom salts.[5] Leave essential-oil products out unless you have individual advice. A plain warm bath or shower is an option.

Seek urgent help for breathing difficulty or a severe reaction. Full references and disclaimer are on page 4.

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PREPARE / SOAK OR SHOWER / GET COSY

Your evening routine

Why make time for a bath?

Warm water may help ease muscle tension and offer a quiet pause away from everyday demands.[1] It can be a way to make time for yourself, without needing to feel completely relaxed. The experience matters more than any ingredient.

01 Set the scene

Soften the lighting but keep it safe. Put your phone aside and gather a towel, cosy clothes, water, a journal and a pen.

02 Choose a bath or shower

Use warm, not hot, water and follow page 1's safety notes. Plain water is enough. No bath? Take an unhurried warm shower, or skip the water ritual and go straight to journalling.

03 Get cosy, then reflect

Dry off, put on something comfortable and choose one prompt on page 3. A sentence or two is enough.

My evening checklist

☐ I have checked the safety notes and chosen what suits me.

☐ My choice: plain-water bath / suitable bath product / shower / journal only.

☐ My towel, cosy clothes, journal and pen are ready.

☐ I will choose one prompt, without pressure to finish everything.

A time that usually suits me

One small detail that would make this feel like mine

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AFTER YOUR BATH OR SHOWER

A little space to reflect

Choose one prompt or try them all. There is no right answer. Skip anything uncomfortable; you do not need to solve anything tonight.

1. What felt heavy today?

Name it without judging yourself. What can wait until tomorrow?

2. What is one small thing that went okay?

A warm shower or a decent cup of tea counts.

3. What do I need a little more of tonight?

Comfort, quiet, connection or something else?

4. What can I give myself permission to leave unfinished?

You do not have to earn a pause.

5. What would make tomorrow morning feel a little kinder?

Choose one small, manageable thing.

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KEEP FOR REFERENCE

About this guide

Made for real evenings, not perfect ones. The bath, shower and journalling are optional. Use what suits you and leave the rest; the aim is a manageable pause.

Health & safety disclaimer

General self-care information, not medical advice or a treatment for anxiety, insomnia or any health condition. This guide does not replace advice from your doctor, midwife or pharmacist. Follow product labels and the safety notes. Products may cause irritation or allergic reactions. Seek individual advice if unsure, and professional support for ongoing sleep difficulties or distress.

Sources

Numbers beside guidance refer to these sources. Full URLs are clickable and included for printed copies.

1. Cleveland Clinic: Baths and relaxation
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/reasons-to-take-a-bath

2. Cleveland Clinic: Epsom salt evidence and cautions
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/7-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-epsom-salt

3. Tisserand Institute: Bath safety
https://tisserandinstitute.org/safety/bath-safety-2/

4. American Academy of Dermatology: Testing skin products
https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/skin-care-secrets/prevent-skin-problems/test-skin-care-products

5. DailyMed: Epsom salt label and soaking warnings
https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/fda/fdaDrugXsl.cfm?setid=c93e2a1d-0fc4-4dc7-b253-9a9fe1a62151&type=display

6. Cleveland Clinic: Baths during pregnancy
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/baths-while-pregnant

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