

Soothing Your Baby

The first 3 months of your new baby's life is sometimes referred to as the "4th trimester". This term has been used to describe the transition from the womb to the outside world. Your baby is getting used to the variety of noises, lights, smells, sounds and sensations. Moving from the familiar comfort of the warm, dark, and quiet womb to a noisy, bright and often cold environment is a major change for a baby. Some babies can be fussier than others during this time.

Some babies may benefit greatly from techniques that mimic the time they spent in the uterus.

Five actions have been identified that appear to help babies who are fussy and need help calming after all other basic needs have been checked (diapers are clean, baby has fed well, no signs of illness)-

Inside the uterus, babies are very snug. They experience continuous movement, hear a constant rhythmical heartbeat, and suckle as they please. If your baby seems to have difficulty calming, the following actions can be helpful:

- **Swaddle your baby.** Swaddling keeps a baby's arms close to their body when they are on their back. This prevents triggering the Moro (or falling) reflex, which can wake or startle a baby. A swaddled baby should be placed to sleep on their back (not on their stomach or side) and should sleep alone (not in a bed with other people). Once your baby is trying to roll over, do not swaddle your baby. Instead, you may want to transfer your baby to a sleep bag with their arms free. All babies, but especially a baby who is swaddled, should be kept in the vicinity of a parent or caregiver when they are asleep. *See our diagram on **Swaddling Your Baby** for additional information.*
- **Hold your baby in a side position.** This position may make a baby feel more secure.
- **Gently swing or rock your baby in your arms.**
- **"Shoosh" your baby with a rhythmical sound.**
- **Let your baby suckle frequently** (either at the breast, on a finger, or a pacifier).

Don't give up after the first try! The 5 S's may help establish a routine that calms your baby.

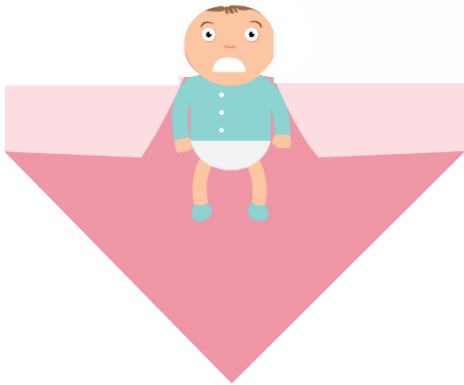
Do pacifiers cause problems with breastfeeding? If your baby is hungry and wants to suckle, it is important to feed your baby. Not all babies need or want a pacifier. However, if your baby is gaining weight well, you may decide to use a pacifier to help calm your baby. (See our information on **Pacifiers**.)

There are cultures where babies cry very little! Their babies are held close and carried by an adult most of the day. Many child development experts confirm that meeting a young baby's needs promptly tends to produce children and adults who are more secure and content. (See our handout on **Wearing Your Baby**.)



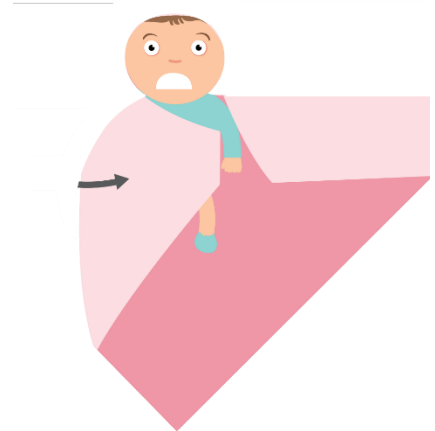
Reviewed March 2024

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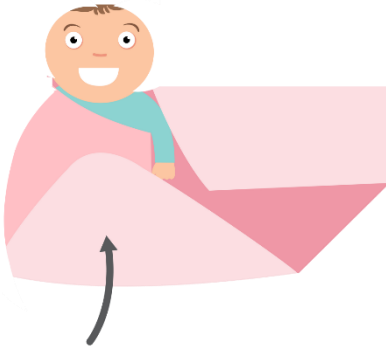


1. Take a small blanket and lay out in a diamond shape. Fold the top corner down, slightly longer than the width of your baby's shoulders.

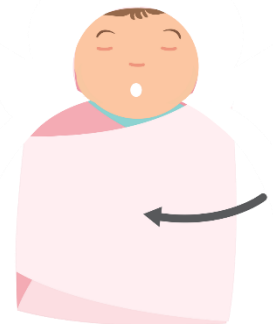
2. Hold baby's right arm snugly against his/her side and firmly wrap the blanket over baby's body. Tuck the swaddle blanket under baby's body to anchor the blanket.



3. Take the bottom corner and lay across baby's body, leaving room for baby's legs to move freely. Baby's legs should not be tightly wrapped. Allow room for baby's hips and thighs to move. This is an optional step to keep the bottom of the blanket tidy.



4. Continue to hold baby's left arm close to his/her body and snugly wrap the blanket around baby's upper body. Tuck the loose end into an edge of the wrapped blanket. The weight of the baby's body will help hold the swaddle in place.



Once your baby is trying to roll over to his/her stomach, discontinue swaddling your baby. A sleep bag may be an option to consider instead.