

Soothing Your Baby

Some babies have more difficulty calming themselves and may benefit greatly from techniques that mimic the time they spent in the uterus.

Babies may be fussy in the first three months due to hunger. If so, it is important to feed your baby well. Other babies may be fussy due to a digestive problem, such as an abundant milk supply, a food sensitivity, or reflux (spitting up). Many fussy babies benefit from calming assistance from their parents.

Dr. Harvey Karp, a pediatrician, has identified five actions that appear to help babies who are fussy with no apparent physical cause. He aims to duplicate the sensations of the uterus and trigger a powerful response in a baby's brain – what he refers to as “the calming reflex.”

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, Dr. Karp suggests the 5 S's:

- **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 transition 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.**)

Dr. William Sears, another pediatrician, believes that babies benefit from being held close and nursing frequently. Dr. Sears claims that “wearing” your baby results in a more content baby. Both Dr. Sears and Dr. Karp point to 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.

For additional information, you may want to read:

- *The Happiest Baby on the Block* by Harvey Karp, MD.
- *The Fussy Baby Book* by William Sears, MD, and Martha Sears, RN.

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