

# Swaddling Your Baby

Swaddling is a way to wrap your baby in a thin blanket. It helps some infants relax and sleep. It may also limit the startle reflex (when babies are surprised and throw out their arms and legs, then curl them in), which can wake them.

It's important to know when and how to swaddle babies safely. Once it seems like they're trying to roll over — often around age 2 months — they shouldn't be swaddled. And all infants, swaddled or not, should always be placed on their back for sleep. Babies who aren't swaddled safely have an increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), the sudden and unexplained death of a baby younger than 1 year old.

## When Should I Swaddle My Baby?

You can swaddle babies for naps and nighttime sleep to see if it comforts them. You can also try it if your infant is fussy or crying. Swaddling is a good way to help ease colic (when a healthy baby cries a lot for a longer time than most infants).

You might want to try swaddling the next time your baby needs to get a vaccine. You'll wrap your infant but leave a leg free for the shot. This can help comfort babies before, during, and right after the shots.

## How Do I Swaddle My Baby?

Here's how to swaddle your baby safely:

1. Spread out a thin baby blanket with one corner folded over slightly.
2. Lay your baby face-up on the blanket with their head above the folded corner. You can put their arms at the sides, cross them, or even leave them out of the swaddle. Do what comforts your baby.
3. Wrap the left corner over your baby's body and tuck it behind their back, going under the arm on the right.
4. Bring the bottom corner up over your baby's feet and fold it down at their chest. Keep the blanket from touching your infant's face. Their hips and knees should be slightly bent and turned out. Pulling the blanket too tightly may increase the chance of hip dysplasia, a problem with the way the hip joints form.
5. Wrap the right corner around your baby and tuck it under their back on the left side, leaving only their neck and head showing. If you're leaving their arms out of the swaddle, tuck the blanket under their arm on the left.
6. Make sure your infant isn't wrapped too tightly. You should be able to slip a hand between the blanket and their chest. This will let your baby breathe comfortably. But check that the blanket isn't so loose that it could come undone.

## When Should I Stop Swaddling My Baby?

Stop swaddling when your baby shows signs of starting to roll over, like turning onto their side. That's usually around 2 months.

## How Can I Keep My Baby Safe While Swaddling?

Swaddling a baby may increase the chance of SIDS. The risk is higher if an infant is put to sleep on their belly, rolls onto their tummy while swaddled, or gets too hot when swaddled.

To help keep your swaddled baby safe:

- Follow the steps above for how to swaddle your infant.
- Put your baby to sleep on their back, never on their side or belly. Follow all safe sleep guidelines.
- Keep your infant from getting too hot. If your baby shows signs of being too warm (like sweating or flushed cheeks), take off the swaddle.
- Don't use a weighted swaddle. It could harm your infant's breathing.
- Stop swaddling your baby as soon as your little one shows signs of starting to roll over on their own.

## What Else Should I Know?

It can take time to learn how to swaddle correctly and safely, so be patient. Ask your doctor or other health care provider to show you how to do it and practice in the office. You can also ask for reliable step-by-step videos to watch online.

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