



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

How to Calm a Crying Baby

Why do babies cry?

Crying is one of the 70 reflexes an infant is born with. Crying is nature's perfect smoke alarm. Babies get your attention by crying. Babies cry because they are hungry, uncomfortable, over stimulated, ill, or just bored. Your baby is telling you that she needs something.

What can I do?

Learning to calm your baby when she cries takes some practice, but once you learn how, you will have a much happier baby. Dr. Harvey Karp believes that the following techniques, known as the 5 S's, will help to calm a crying baby.

Swaddling

An ancient tradition of wrapping a baby securely in her blanket is called swaddling. This can help your baby feel safe and secure when adjusting to all of the new experiences that happen.

Swaddling may help your baby sleep better, feel warm and secure, reduce symptoms of colic, and also may reduce the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

The best type of blanket to use for swaddling is a large light-weight square blanket. When the weather allows, have your baby only wear a diaper. A good type of clothing to use is the snapsuit, also called creeper or diaper shirt. One example is the Onesies® brand by Gerber®.

Never cover your baby's head when swaddling.

Side or Stomach

Babies calm more quickly when they are on their side or stomach because this position is how they were in the mother's womb before they were born.

Reminder - Babies should always be placed on their backs when sleeping. The side or stomach position is only used to calm a crying baby.

Swinging

Gently swing, jiggle, or bounce your baby while you support the head, neck, and bottom. Hold your baby on your lap, in your arms, or cradle securely.

The swinging movement mimics what was experienced by your baby when you moved about during pregnancy.

Always hold your baby securely and never move your baby in a way that would cause serious injury. **Never shake your baby.**

“Shhh”

“Shhh-ing” may help if swaddling, side/stomach position, and swinging does not work. Place your mouth close to your baby’s ear and make a loud “shh” sound. The “shh” sound must be louder than the crying. This sound mimics what was heard when your baby was in the womb.

Sucking

Babies need to suck for many reasons, including instinct, nutrition, and comfort. If your baby continues to cry after trying the above techniques, you may offer a pacifier or place one of your clean fingers in your baby’s mouth to help calm her down.

References

Harvey Karp is a board certified pediatrician and associate professor of pediatrics at UCLA School of Medicine developed if techniques to calm a crying baby.

Karp HN. 2008. Safe swaddling and healthy hips: don't toss the baby out with the bathwater. *Pediatrics*, 121(5), 1075-6.

Karp, H.N. 2003. *The happiest baby on the block: The new way to calm crying and help your newborn baby sleep longer*. New York, New York: Bantam Dell.

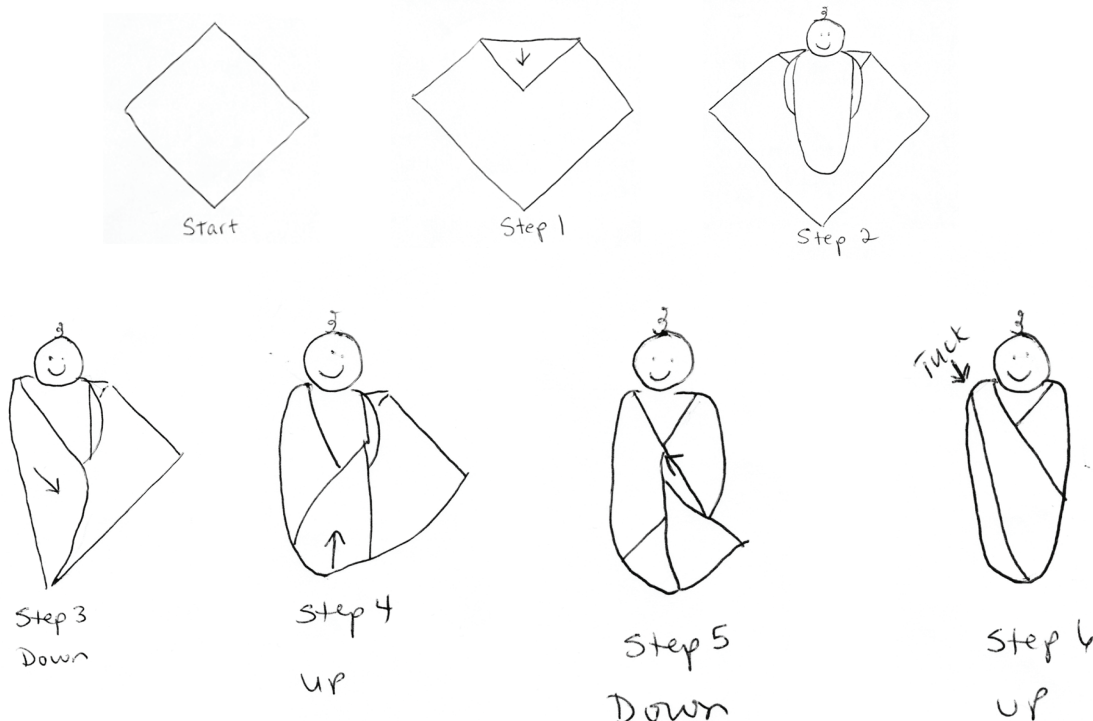
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Speak up at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

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Instructions with pictures for Swaddling

- Step 1** Lay a large light-weight square blanket on a flat surface and fold down one corner about 6 inches.
- Step 2** Place your baby with the baby's shoulders on the folded corner.
- Step 3** While holding your baby's left arm down at the side, pull the blanket down and across the baby's body, tucking the blanket tightly under your baby's back. Fold the blanket over legs and feet loosely so the infant can move his legs around for exercise.
- Step 4** Pull the bottom corner of the blanket up and over the baby's shoulder, tucking the blanket securely underneath. If your blanket is small, put the corner under the baby's chin.
- Step 5** While holding the baby's right arm down, pull the top part of the remaining blanket down to the middle of the baby's chest holding the blanket in place with your left hand. Hold the blanket with your fingers.
- Step 6** Bring the remaining piece of blanket up and across your baby's body wrapping the blanket snugly across the baby's back. Tuck the blanket in the pocket in the front. The baby should be free to move and flex his legs but the arms should remain still.



Remember: DUDU (Down, Up, Down, Up) when you wrap your baby.

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