

The Top Ten "Myth" Conceptions About Babies

A new parent's top job is to love their baby like crazy. But, their next most important jobs are: 1) to feed their baby successfully and 2) to calm her when she cries. Parents who struggle with either of these tasks feel frustrated and desperate.

Many are shocked to discover their baby's cries are their biggest challenge. After the first few weeks of life, one in five babies cries for hours a day...for no apparent reason. Those sharp, unrelenting cries can push some parents "over the edge" into marital stress, depression and even child abuse.

In The Happiest Baby on the Block, Dr. Harvey Karp teaches parents that it's easy to calm crying babies and he proves that the whole idea of colic is just one of many myths that new parents are taught about their babies.

This inexperience leads us to rely on the advice of books and friends...but what if the information they give is wrong? Dr. Karp has identified 10 major myths that are a source of frustration and unhappiness to new parents:

1) Women naturally know how to care for their new babies.

NO – Of course, the desire to care for one's baby is intuitive, but knowing exactly how to do so is a skill that must be learned. Fortunately, like riding a bike, it is easy to learn and only requires a bit of training.

2) The nuclear family is normal.

NO – Throughout time, human beings have always raised our new babies with the help of many relatives and neighbors.

3) Babies are ready to be born after 9 months.

NO – After 9 months of pregnancy, moms are certainly ready for it to end, but babies are not. Unlike horses, able to run from the first day, our newborns are very immature at birth.

4) Newborns need us to whisper and tiptoe so they don't get over-stimulated.

NO – The world is too still for newborns! In the womb, babies experience constant noise (louder than a vacuum cleaner) and vigorous jiggling. For most babies, under-stimulation is much bigger problem than over-stimulation.

5) Swaddling is bad for babies because they need free hands to explore the world.

NO – More than freedom to explore, newborns need security. They need tight boundaries, like they enjoyed in the uterus, to keep from flailing and getting upset.

6) Some babies just cry and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

NO – In many cultures around the world, babies never cry longer than a minute! Dr. Karp teaches the ancient secrets of these societies so that all parents can learn to calm their baby's wails in minutes...or less.

7) Babies with loud painful sounding cries have gas.

NO - Why would gas pains go away with car rides or a vacuum cleaner? Only 2% of babies have serious stomach problems. Many babies sound like they're in pain but like smoke alarms, those babies are only able to make one sound to attract your attention.

8) Going to your baby every time she cries will spoil her.

NO – Rather than getting spoiled, young babies who are attended to each time they cry become secure and confident in the love of those around them! Remember, in the uterus, babies are held, jiggled and shushed 24 hours a day, so from their point of view even being cuddled 12 hours a day is a huge cutback.

9) Women are better at calming babies than men.

NO – Moms are certainly best at breastfeeding, but dads can be terrific baby calmers because we're more comfortable jiggling and shushing them a little more vigorously.

10) Technology has the answers to the problems of new parents.

NO – Both breastfeeding and calming crying babies requires ancient wisdom not medicine. Burp drops and sedatives are completely unnecessary because the secret to calming unhappy babies is to imitate the sensations they experienced inside uterus.

A "fourth trimester" of rhythmic stimulation calms babies by activating their calming reflex - virtually an off-switch for crying! This reflex is almost irresistible during a baby's first 3-4 months of life. Any parent can learn how to turned on their baby's calming reflex by doing 5 precise, but simple, steps - the 5 S's (Swaddling, Side/stomach position, Shushing, Swinging and Sucking). The 5 S's mimic a baby's life during their long, happy months inside the uterus.

The 5 "S's": Five Steps to Turn On Your Baby's Calming Reflex

*Few impulses are as powerful as a parent's desire to calm her crying baby.
Although this instinct is as ancient as parenting itself, calming a baby is a skill that takes some practice.*

1. Swaddling: A Feeling of Pure 'Wrap'ture

Tight swaddling is the cornerstone of calming, the essential first step in soothing your fussy baby and keeping him soothed. Wrapping makes your baby feel magically returned to the womb and satisfies his longing for the continuous touching and snugness he enjoyed there. Swaddling also protects your baby by keeping him from accidentally flipping onto the stomach. Always check to make sure your baby is not overheated and do not allow him to sleep in bed with loose blankets. Make sure your baby is feeding 8 to 10 times a day.

2. Side/Stomach: Your Baby's 'Feel-Good' Position

The side/stomach positions soothe your fussy newborn by instantly shutting off the Moro Reflex (the panicky feeling of falling). That's why these are perfect feel-good positions for unhappy babies. When you put your infant to sleep, however, the back is the only safe position.

3. Shhhing: Your Baby's Favorite Soothing Sound

A loud, harsh shushing sound is music to your baby's ears. Shhhing comforts him by mimicking the whooshing noise your blood made as it flowed through the arteries of the placenta. And, the louder your baby cries, the louder the Shhhing has to be in order to calm him.

4. Swinging: Rock-a-Bye Baby

To your baby, fresh out of the womb, lying on a soft, motionless bed is disorienting and unnatural. Newborns are like sailors who come to dry land after nine months at sea; the sudden stillness can drive them bananas. That's why rhythmic, monotonous, jiggle movement – what we call swinging – is one of the most common methods parents have always used to calm their babies. To get your baby to stop crying, the swinging should be like a shiver (fast, tiny movements). Then, once he is settling down you can use a slower, broader rocking motion to keep him calm. Of course, you should never shake your baby out of anger or frustration.

5. Sucking: The Icing on the Cake

One of the most perfect ways to soothe your cranky baby is to let her suckle. Sucking takes a baby who is beginning to quiet and lulls her into a deep and profound state of tranquility. Sucking triggers your baby's calming reflex and leads to a rich and satisfying level of relaxation.

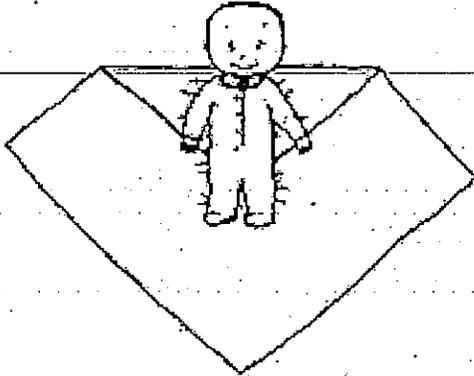
6. Vigor: The Essential Tip for Calming Baby

The fastest way to succeed in stopping your baby's cycle of crying is to *meet his level of intensity* with snug swaddling, loud shushing and fast, little jiggling motions. This need for vigor often seems odd to first-time parents, but after your screaming baby pauses for a few moments you can gradually slow your motion, soften your sound, and guide him down from his frenzy to a soft landing.

The DUDU wrap

There are as many ways to swaddle babies as there are ways to fold napkins for a dinner party, but one method is clearly the best. It's called the "DUDU" wrap. (DUDU, pronounced "doo doo", stands for Down-Up-Down-Up.)

Getting prepared to start swaddling

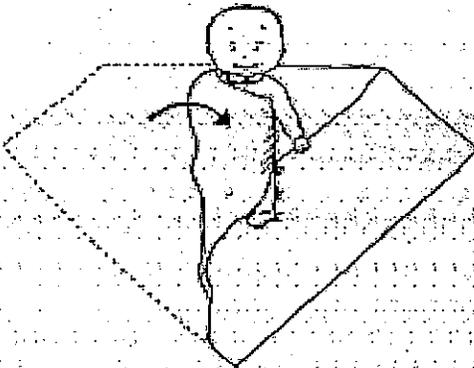


(When learning to wrap practice on a doll or on your baby when she's calm.)

- 1) Place the blanket on your bed and position it like a diamond.
- 2) Fold the top corner down so the top point touches the center of the blanket.
- 3) Place your baby on the blanket so her neck lays on the top edge.
- 4) Hold your baby's right arm down straight at her side. If she resists, be patient. The arm will straighten after just a moment or two of gentle pressure.

The DUDU wrap begins

1) DOWN



Just as swaddling is the cornerstone of calming, this first DOWN is the cornerstone of swaddling. This must be done well or the wrap will unravel.

Hold your baby's right arm straight against her side, grab the blanket 3-4 inches from her right shoulder and pull it very tightly down and across her body. (It should look like one side of a V-neck sweater).

Tuck – Keeping the blanket taut, finish pulling it all the way down and tuck it under her left buttocks and lower back. This anchors the wrap.

Snug – While firmly holding the blanket against her left hip, grab the top edge of the blanket next to her unwrapped shoulder and tug it very snug. Pull the blanket tightly to remove any slack around your baby's right arm.

After this first "DOWN...tuck...snug", her right arm should be held so securely against her side she can't bend her arm up, even if you let go of the blanket.

Please, don't be surprised if your baby suddenly cries louder when you pull the blanket tight. You're not hurting her! Her cry means she's out of control and she's simply not aware she's just seconds away from happiness.

How to Switch-Off Your Baby's Crying With the 5S's

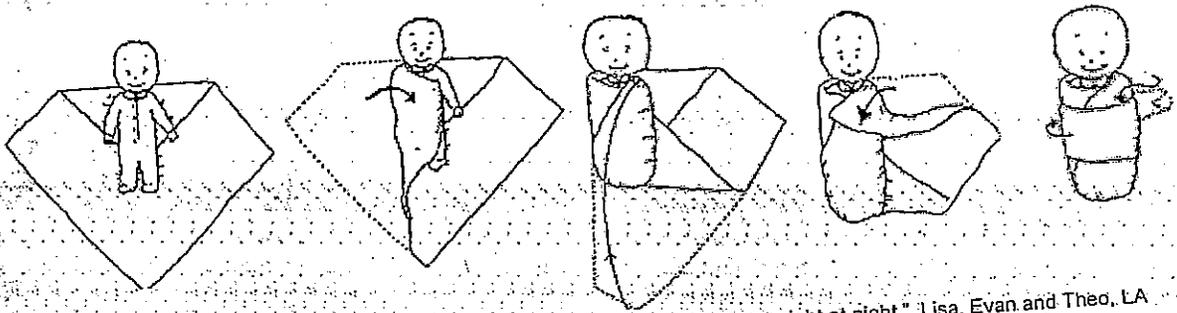
The 5 S's are great for soothing your baby during her fussy times. They trigger her calming reflex – the automatic off-switch for crying. As you do the 5 S's, remember these important points:

- 1) Calming your baby is like dancing with her...but you have to follow her lead. Do the 5S's vigorously only lessening the intensity after she begins to settle.
- 2) The 5 S's must be done exactly right for them to work.

Here's a summary of the most important aspects of the 5 S's that will help you become the "Best Baby Calmer On The Block"...

The 1st S – Swaddling

Don't worry if your baby's first reaction to wrapping is to struggle against it. Swaddling may not instantly calm her fussiness but what it will do is restrain her uncontrolled flailing so she can pay attention to the next S's you do which will turn-on her calming reflex and guide her into sweet serenity! Remember to avoid loose blankets and overheating. Also feed your baby 8-12 times a day.



"Swaddling made a huge difference for Theo. Now he is sleeping 5-6 hours straight at night." Lisa, Evan and Theo, LA

The 2nd S – Side/Stomach

Babies should always sleep on their backs. However, the more upset your baby is, the unhappier she will be on her back. Rolling your infant onto her side or stomach will make her much more serene. Just this simple trick can sometimes activate a baby's calming reflex... within seconds.

"The first time I saw the 5 "S's" I couldn't believe my eyes. Ben stopped crying in seconds and my jaw was on the floor!" Christina, Jonah and Ben, LA

The 3rd S – Shhhh

Shushing crying babies magically makes them feel at peace and back home, but you've got to do it about as loud as your baby's crying and close to her ear ...or she won't even notice it. Use this super-effective "S" to keep her calm throughout her fussy period by enlisting the aid of a radio tuned to loud static, a tape recording of your hair drier or a white noise machine.

"My wife and I bought no less than ten baby books. But, these great tips were not in any of them." Martin, Ann and Madison, Brentwood

The 4th S – Swinging

Like vigorous shushing, quick jiggling movements, almost like shivering, can turn your baby from screams to sweet serenity in minutes...or less. As you support your baby's head and neck, wiggle her upper body with fast, tiny movements, sort of like you're shivering. Once she's entranced you can transfer her wrapped body into a swing for continual, hypnotic motion. (Make sure the strap is between your baby's wrapped legs, the swing is fully reclined, and it's set on the fastest speed.)

Of course, you should never shake your baby out of anger or frustration.



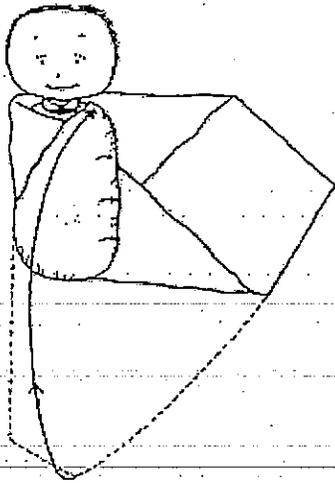
"Colic hit us like a freight train.. But within two weeks of learning the 5S's Emma was sleeping 8-10 hours a night! Jody, Sam and Emma, LA

The 5th S – Sucking

This last "S" usually works best after you have already lead your little one into calmness with the other "S's". Offering her your breast (if that is not available and the nursing is going smoothly you can use a finger or pacifier) is the icing on the cake of soothing. You can teach your baby to keep a pacifier in her mouth by using "reverse-psychology" - the moment she begins to suck on the pacifier gently tug on it as if you're going to take it out. She'll suck it in harder and soon she'll learn to keep it in her mouth even when she's cooing.

2)

UP



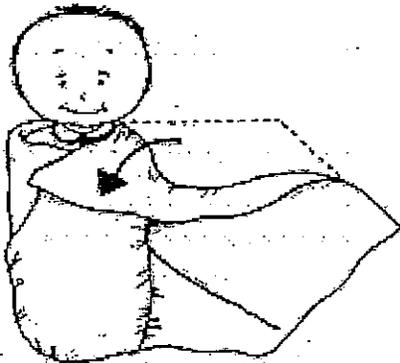
Now, straighten her left arm against her side and bring the bottom straight up to cover the arm. The bottom blanket point should reach up and over her left shoulder. It's OK if her legs are bent, but be sure her arms are straight.

Tuck – Tuck this corner tightly under her whole left arm with your right hand. Her arm should be pressed against her body.

Snug – While your left hand still holds her left arm down, use your right hand to grab the blanket 3" from her left shoulder and snug it with a continuous pull (stretch it as much as possible). This removes any slack.

3)

DOWN



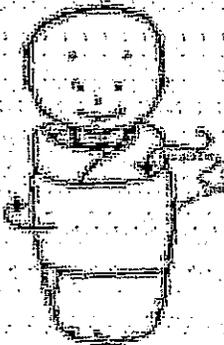
Still holding the blanket 3" from her left shoulder, pull the blanket taut and down, but only...a smidge.

A smidge – This DOWN should only bring a smidge of fabric over her left shoulder to her upper chest. Like the 2nd half of the V-neck sweater. (A mistake parents often make with the DUDU wrap is to bring this down fold all the way to their baby's feet... remember, it's just a smidge.)

Hold - Using your left hand, hold that small fold of blanket pressed against her breastbone, like you are holding down a ribbon while making a bow.

4)

UP



As your left hand holds that fold, grab the last free blanket corner with your right hand and pull it firmly, straight out to your right. This will get every last bit of stretch and slack out of the wrap you've done so far. And, without releasing the tension, lift that corner in one smooth motion, up and...

Across – Bring it tightly across her waist and wrap it around her body like a belt. The belt should go right over her forearms, holding them down against her sides.

Snug - The finishing touch of the DUDU wrap is to snug the "belt" by giving it one last tight pull to remove any slack and then just tucking it in. This last tight snug and tuck keep the whole swaddle from popping open.

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