

Swaddling

Many parents wonder if they need to swaddle their baby. Babies do not need to be swaddled, but it can help soothe them and reduce their startle reflex.

There are some risks when swaddling. If baby is placed on, or rolls to, the tummy while swaddled, baby may be unable to breathe. If baby is swaddled with a blanket, it could come loose and become a suffocation hazard. Swaddling could also cause baby to overheat.



What should be used for swaddling?

- Use a sleep sack with Velcro swaddle attachment or a swaddle sack.
- If you don't have a sleep sack, you can swaddle your baby in a thin blanket, such as a receiving blanket. **Do not use soft, thick, fuzzy blankets.**

How should the swaddle be positioned?

- The swaddle should be in line with baby's shoulders. If it's too high, it can get in the way of baby's breathing.
- There should be enough room to fit two fingers between your baby's chest and the swaddle. This helps your baby breathe comfortably.
- If you are using a sleep sack or swaddle sack with Velcro closures, take extra care to not swaddle too tightly.
- Keep swaddle loose at baby's hips. The hips and legs need to have room to move. If it is too tight, it can cause problems with baby's hips.

Swaddling and safe sleep

- Always place your baby on the back when swaddled.
- Your baby should sleep in a crib, bassinet or pack and play with a firm mattress and well-fitted sheet.
- No other objects, such as pillows, blankets, or stuffed toys should be in baby's sleep space.

Stop swaddling:

- By six to eight weeks.
- Earlier if:
 - Baby shows **any** signs of *attempting* to roll.
 - Baby begins to wiggle out of the swaddle.

Notify everyone who cares for your baby when swaddling is stopped.

Don't let baby get too warm.

Babies should be dressed for the space they are in. Under the swaddle:

- Dress your baby in a light sleeper or onesie.
- If the weather is warm or your house is very warm, put your baby in a diaper only.

Some signs your baby may be getting too warm:

- Red, flushed cheeks or cheeks look darker than normal
- Sweating
- Fast, shallow breathing
- Chest or back is warm to the touch

If baby is showing signs that he **may** be too warm, remove clothing/layers. If removing layers doesn't help, your baby may be sick. For questions or concerns about your baby, contact your pediatrician or health care provider.

This information applies to healthy, full-term infants.

For specific questions about your baby, ask your pediatrician or health care provider.

How should baby's arms be positioned when swaddled?

You can position baby's arms in a variety of ways, but there are benefits to having arms either:

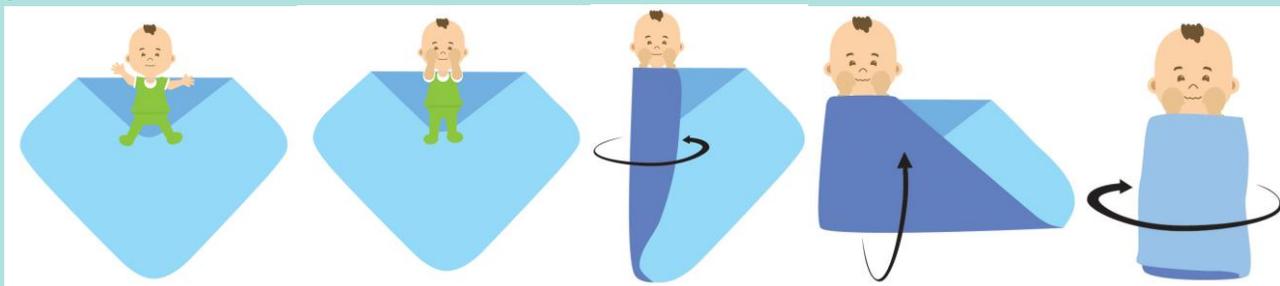
- Bent at elbows with arms on the chest and hands positioned near baby's face.
- On top of baby's chest with hands touching in the middle.

Step-by-step instructions

There are many ways to swaddle baby with a blanket. Here are instructions for two ways to swaddle your baby.

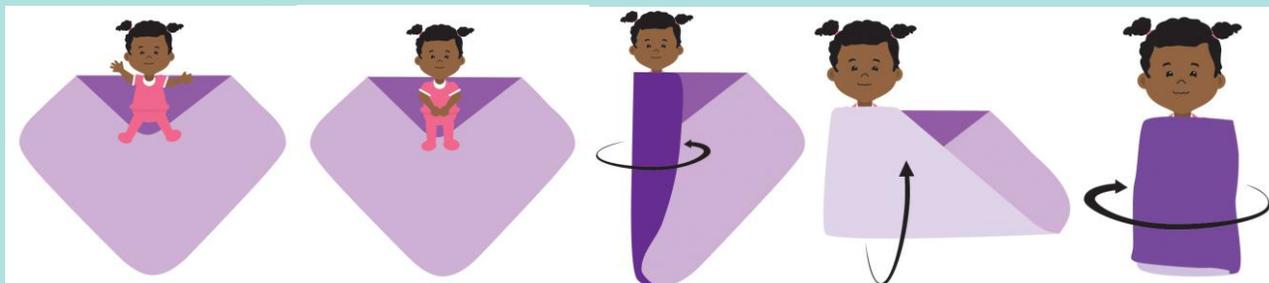
Technique 1 – Arms up near face

1. Spread the blanket out flat and fold down one corner to create a straight edge. Lay the baby face-up on the blanket with shoulders in line with the top edge of the blanket.
2. Position baby's arms so they are bent at elbows with arms on the chest and hands touching and positioned near baby's face.
3. Wrap the left corner of the blanket over baby's body and tuck it around the left side.
4. Fold the bottom end of the cloth up. Make sure it does not cover baby's face and that there is plenty of room so baby's legs can move up and out.
5. Fold the right corner of the blanket over baby's body and tuck it under the right side. The weight of the baby will hold the cloth firmly in place.



Technique 2 – Arms on chest

1. Spread the blanket out flat and fold down one corner to create a straight edge. Lay the baby face-up on the blanket with baby's shoulders in line with the top edge of the blanket.
2. Position baby's arms resting on top of baby's chest with hands touching in the middle.
3. Repeat steps 3 through 5 above.



Note: If you are swaddling with a sleep sack with a swaddle attachment or a swaddle sack, refer to step #2 in the examples for how to position baby's arms.

Go to [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.HealthyChildren.org) from the American Academy of Pediatrics for more information on swaddling including short videos on how to swaddle. For more information on safe sleep, go to Michigan.gov/SafeSleep.