

# The Ultimate Guide to Swaddling and Baby Sleep Safety



## Highlights

Swaddling, when done correctly, can help your baby settle and sleep on their back during the early months.

Stop swaddling or wrapping your baby as soon as they show signs of attempting to roll onto their tummy.

A safe infant sleeping bag is an alternative to swaddling your baby. It can also be used once your baby is rolling onto their tummy.

Always follow safe sleep recommendations.

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## Benefits of Swaddling

Swaddling \(\wrapping a baby in a lightweight cloth to their shoulders\) can help calm a baby by recreating the restricted space of the uterus, aiding in sleep.

Swaddled babies often wake less frequently and sleep longer than non-swaddled babies.

There is limited evidence that wrapping babies helps to protect against sudden unexpected deaths in infancy.

No evidence suggests that swaddling is harmful when done safely.

### **When Is Swaddling Appropriate?**

Swaddling is suitable for very young babies - from birth until they begin to show signs that they can roll over \(\usually between 4 to 6 months old, but sometimes younger\).

### **When Not to Swaddle**

Stop swaddling your baby once they can roll onto their tummy or if they seem to dislike it.

If your baby doesn't like being wrapped or if they can roll, consider using a safe infant sleeping bag.

Do not swaddle your baby if they share a sleep surface with another person.

### **How to Swaddle Your Baby**

Use a lightweight cotton or muslin wrap to swaddle your baby. Avoid using rugs or blankets as they may cause overheating.

Prevent overheating by dressing your baby appropriately under the wrap. In warm weather, a singlet and nappy may be sufficient, while cooler weather may require a lightweight jumpsuit.

Newborn babies are usually swaddled with their arms folded across their chest.

Once the startle reflex is gone (around 3 months), leave your baby's arms free to self-soothe.

Ensure your baby is placed on their back with their feet at the bottom of the cot. Do not cover their head or face to avoid restricting breathing or overheating.

The wrap should be firm but not too tight, allowing normal chest movement during breathing.

The wrap should not be tight around your baby's hips and legs. Tight wrapping can lead to hip problems such as hip dysplasia or dislocation. Swaddle correctly so that your baby's legs can bend at the hips with knees apart.

## **Safe Sleeping Recommendations**

Breastfeed your baby if you can.

Always place your baby on their back to sleep. Never place them on their tummy or side.

Keep your baby's face and head uncovered.

Ensure the sleeping environment is smoke-free before and after birth.

Make sure your baby has a safe sleep environment at all times.

Sleep your baby in their own safe sleep space in your or a caregiver's room for the first 6 months.

## **Tools and Assistance**

### **Safe Sleep Space**

Ensure your baby sleeps in a safe, flat sleep surface, such as a crib, cot, or bassinet, that meets safety standards. Avoid using soft bedding like pillows, blankets, or bumper pads, as these pose a suffocation risk.

### **Baby Sleep Sack or Sleeping Bag**

A safe infant sleeping bag is an alternative to swaddling once your baby starts rolling over. It keeps your baby warm while preventing loose bedding that could cover their face during sleep. It's important to choose one that is the

appropriate size for your baby to avoid the risk of suffocation or overheating.

## **Swaddle Wraps**

There are various swaddle wraps available, made of breathable fabrics like cotton or muslin. They are designed to securely wrap your baby, reducing the risk of overheating and ensuring they cannot wriggle free. Ensure the wrap is the right size and snug around the shoulders while allowing your baby's hips to move freely.

## **Monitoring Devices**

While you should always supervise your baby during sleep, you can use baby monitors for additional peace of mind. These monitors can help you keep an eye on your baby from another room, especially in the early months when you may be concerned about their safety during sleep.

## **Baby Sleepwear**

Ensure your baby wears appropriate sleepwear under the swaddle or sleeping bag, considering the room temperature. In warmer weather, a single layer like a onesie may suffice, while in cooler temperatures, consider dressing your baby in a lightweight sleeper or jumpsuit to prevent them from getting cold.

## **Professional Guidance**

If you have any concerns about your baby's sleep habits or safety, seek guidance from a pediatrician, sleep consultant, or health professional. They can provide personalized advice based on your baby's health and development.

## **Educational Resources**

Various parenting books, online resources, and parenting classes can provide additional guidance on safe sleep practices. Many hospitals and pediatricians offer resources to help parents understand how to promote healthy sleep habits and create a safe sleep environment.