

The Benefits of Swaddling

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of *Gentle Baby Care* and *The No-Cry Sleep Solution*

The practice of baby-swaddling dates back centuries and is still common in many cultures. Swaddling involves wrapping a baby securely from shoulders to feet with a small blanket.

The benefits of swaddling

- Swaddling can be a great way to soothe and calm a fussy baby. It is thought that being tightly wrapped gives a feeling of security, similar to being in the womb.
- The newborn cannot regulate his temperature as well as an adult, so swaddling keeps his body warm, (Just make sure that he doesn't become *overheated*.)
- Swaddling often helps a young baby sleep longer because it prevents the sudden movements that can cause her to wake up.
- Swaddling can help a baby focus on breastfeeding, helping to keep his arms and legs out of the way.
- Swaddling prevents a newborn baby, who can't quite control his movements yet, from scratching himself with his nails.
- A swaddled baby is easy to carry and hold — an adorable, compact little package.

Swaddling options

Some babies need to adjust to swaddling if it's new to them, so give your baby a few opportunities to get comfortable with it before you abandon the idea. If your baby doesn't seem to like swaddling, or is beginning to outgrow it, try leaving one or both of his arms free and just swaddle the rest of his body. In any case, the blanket should fit snugly, but not tightly; that could impede circulation or cause discomfort.

The age for swaddling

Swaddling usually works well for babies from newborn to about three or four months of age. However, babies who are used to swaddling may enjoy it for even a little longer.

This article is an excerpt from *Gentle Baby Care* by Elizabeth Pantley. (McGraw-Hill, 2003)