

Soothing and sleeping

With the Happiest Baby-method



Parental information on understanding and soothing baby's

In this handout you will learn more about your baby's crying and how to soothe him/her. All babies cry and that is normal. Babies communicate by crying to let you know that they need something, like a clean diaper, food, or attention. After birth, your baby needs to get used to life outside of the womb. Your baby will hear, see, and feel many new things. Your baby needs you to comfort them. The Happiest Baby method can help you with this.

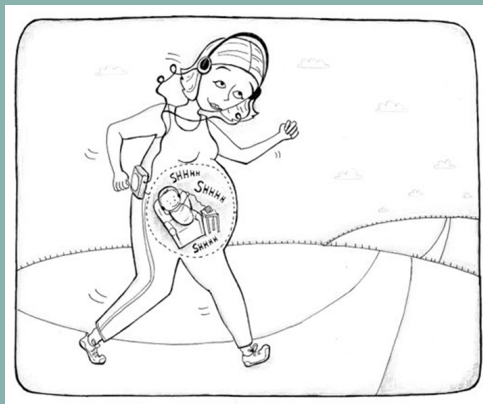
The Happiest Baby method

In the womb, your baby felt safe and secure. After birth, your baby needs to get used to life outside the womb. An American Paediatrician, Harvey Karp, describes a way to soothe babies: the Happiest Baby method.

This method consists of five steps, called the 5 S's. The 5 S's provide sensations that help your baby feel like they are still in the womb. Babies between 0 and 4 months old get comforted by this idea: a calming response occurs.

These are the 5 steps:

Action	Womb sensation
Swaddling	Snug feeling
Side/stomach	Foetal position
Shushing	Womb noise
Swinging	Maternal movement
Sucking	Sucking thumb or amniotic fluid



Step-by-step: the 5s's

1. Swaddling your baby.
2. Holding your baby on the side or tummy.
3. A loud shushing sound next to your baby's ear.
4. Small swinging/wiggling movements.
5. Giving a pacifier/finger to suck on.



Would you like to review the steps in a [videoclip](#) or read more about the Happiest Baby-method? Scan this QR-code!

Step 1. Swaddling your baby

Swaddling is done to make babies feel secure and to help them focus on the next steps. You need a large square cotton or flannel blanket. The blanket should be at least 1 by 1 meter. The fabric should not be too thick and should have some stretch. To make practicing easier, try to swaddle when your baby is relaxed or swaddle a doll first.

1. Place the blanket on a safe, flat surface, with one corner pointing up.
2. Fold the top corner down.
3. Place your baby on the blanket.



5. Place one arm of your baby straight against the body. The arm should not be bent. If your baby does not cooperate, try gently massaging the arms. On the side with your baby's arm down, grab the top of the blanket. Pull the blanket tightly over the top part of the upper arm towards the other side of your baby's body. The front should resemble half of a V-neck.

6. Tuck the tip of the blanket that you are still holding under your baby's back and butt. Leave the other arm free. Pull the fabric a little tighter from the side with the baby's free arm. Then, the blanket should tighten around the shoulders.



Don't be alarmed if your baby cries louder. Swaddling does not hurt, and the fabric is not too tight. Soothing will start at step 2.

7. Put the other arm next to your baby's body.

8. Grab the bottom tip of the blanket. Pull the tip over your baby's other shoulder. Do not pull the tip up too tightly. Your baby should still have space to move the legs. The front now looks like a whole V-neck.



9. Put the tip under your baby's shoulders in the space between the baby's shoulder and the blanket that lays flat.



10. Hold your baby's arm down next to their body. Hold the upper part of the blanket **in the middle**.



Pull it tightly across your baby's chest.



Now put your other hand on the V-neck so that the blanket stays together tightly.



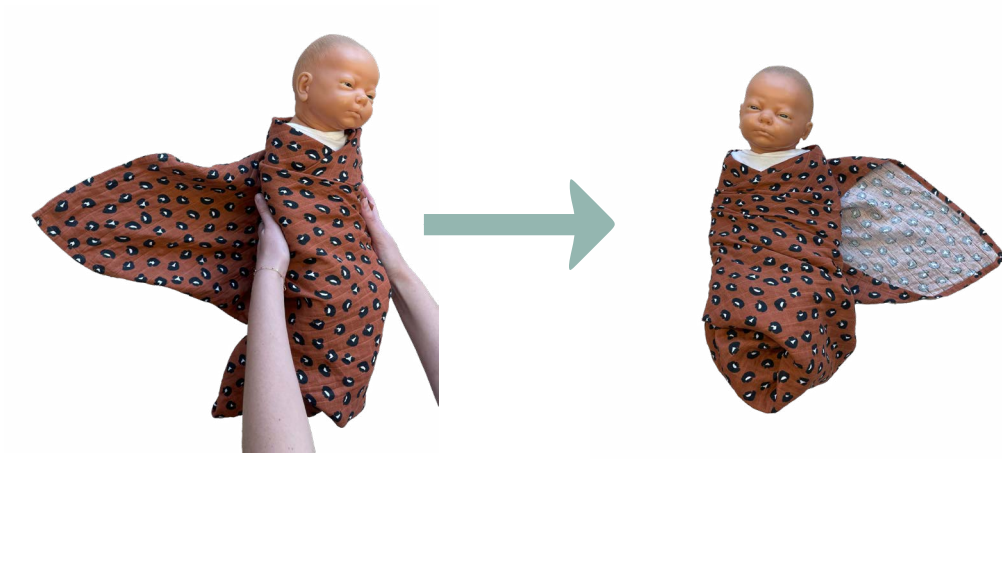
11. Grab the last tip of the blanket with your free hand and pull it upwards. There will now be a fold in the fabric (see arrow).



12. Switch hands. Pull the tip that you are holding across the fold.



13. Pull the tip along the first wrapped arm, and behind the back until you see the tip again.



14. Hold your baby with one hand and pull the tip with your other hand to tighten the blanket.



15. Pull the tip over the second wrapped arm. Tuck the tip tightly into the blanket on your baby's chest.



Note: The arms must be tight against the body. If the arms are bent, swaddling will not work well. The blanket should not be tight at the hips and legs.

Safe swaddling practices

- Two to three fingers should fit between your baby's chest and the blanket.
- **Do not swaddle** if your baby is experiencing a fever, pain, illness, or after your baby got a vaccination.
- Always put your swaddled baby on **his/her back** in bed.
- The swaddle blanket replaces 1 sheet in bed. Make sure your baby is not too warm.
 - Feel the neck and ears. Are they red, warm or sweaty? If so, remove (some of) your baby's clothes.
 - In warm weather, your baby only needs to wear a diaper underneath the swaddle blanket.
 - **Do not put a hat on your baby's head.** Your baby needs to be able to cool off through his head.
- The swaddle blanket **should not** touch your baby's face. Your baby may think they are being fed and will get restless.

Step 2. Holding your baby in the side or stomach position

Your baby enjoys lying on the side or tummy while being carried. This position counteracts the Moro-reflex. You can do this in several ways. See step 4 for positions other than those shown in the next pictures.



Make sure your baby cannot roll off your arm. Your baby can also lie on his/her side on your lap or on their belly against your shoulder. Your baby should **always sleep on the back**. The risk of suffocation is lowest when your baby is on the back while sleeping.

Step 3. Shushing sounds

In the womb, babies hear a lot of sounds. Imitating these sounds calms babies.



- Shush by saying “Ssshhh” in a loud tone close to your baby’s ear. Make sure the shushing sound comes from your own belly (instead of chest). Shush louder than your baby’s crying. Otherwise, your baby can only hear his/her own cries.
 - Shush softer when your baby is crying less. Stop shushing when your baby calms down or stops crying.
 - If your baby starts crying again, start shushing again or turn on white noise. White noise can also be similar to the sounds in your womb.
 - Shushing may sometimes take longer than other times to calm your baby.
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Step 4. Swinging your baby

Babies love movement, especially when soothing them.

- Lay your baby on the side on your forearm. Let the head rest in your hand. Your baby’s head should be in a straight line with the body.
 - Support the head. The head should still be able to wiggle. Wiggling means moving back and forth, like jelly pudding.
 - Wiggle with tiny quick movements. Your baby should only be wiggling about 1 inch back and forth. You mostly want to see movement of the head.
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Note: If you are frustrated or angry, stop using the 5 S’s. Put your baby in a safe place, in the crib or playpen. Try to calm yourself down. Are you unable to calm your baby and does the crying continue? Ask someone for help. Never shake your baby. Let your baby cry until help arrives.

More positions for swinging

Position 1

Place your forearms on your thighs. Place your baby on both forearms in your lap on his/her side. Hold the head in your hands (loosely). Make quick movements with your knees from side to side.



Position 2

Your baby can also lie against your chest or shoulder. Your baby can lie with the belly against your shoulder. Make sure the mouth and nose are free to breathe. Make sure you are supporting your baby's head. With your other hand, gently pat your baby's bottom.

Step 5. Letting your baby suck on something

Your baby can be soothed by sucking. You can use a pacifier or your finger. Sucking helps babies to stay calm longer and promotes sleep.

Tip: Pull gently on the pacifier as your baby sucks on it. Is your baby sucking harder? If not, pull gently on the pacifier a few more times. This will help your baby suck on the pacifier for longer.



This information is a result of the project 'Soothing and sleeping for all parents in the preventive Youth Health Care'.

It is made in collaboration with professionals and parents

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Design and layout by Yves le Sage



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