

Swaddle Your Infant - Safely

Today, 9 out of 10 North American parents swaddle their babies for their first 6 months.

An age-old practice, swaddling wraps a baby tightly in a blanket or swaddling cloth or gown. Swaddling restrains the baby's arms and wraps the extended lower legs.

Swaddling can quiet fussy babies and help calm a crying baby. Swaddled infants generally arouse less and sleep longer. Preterm infants show less distress when swaddled.

While swaddling seems to make sense, doctors warn parents. **If a parent or caregiver swaddles the infant's legs too tight, it can harm his hips.** Babies who are swaddled incorrectly have a greater risk for hip *dysplasia* and *dislocation*.


During the first few months of life, an infant's hips continue to mature. As an infant moves her legs, the hip joints make needed changes. A baby must be able to move and bend her legs up and out at the hips. If tight swaddling prevents this free leg movement, it can cause hip dysplasia.

Experts have other swaddling concerns. Blankets could over-heat the baby. Also, a loose swaddling blanket can unwind and cause breathing problems.

Doctors recommend safe swaddling with proper devices.

- Wrap the arms snugly. This helps control the startle reflex that causes the baby's arms to rise and move.

- Allow room for the baby's hips and knees to bend and move. Do **not** extend the baby's legs and wrap tightly.
- Use a sleep sack with a loose pouch so the baby can move his legs freely.
- Check the swaddling sack to be sure it cannot cover baby's nose and mouth.
- Make sure the swaddling blanket is snug - not loose to unwind as the baby moves.
- Check your sleeping baby often. Take care that he is not too warm and that the swaddling cloth or sack does not impede his breathing.
- **Stop swaddling by the age of 2 months or before the baby starts rolling over.**
- **Always place your baby on his back to sleep.**

 For other tips on swaddling and safe sleeping, log onto www.healthychildren.org



*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital
to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

Revised 2017

 **Children's**
HSHS St. John's Hospital