



Soothing a Fussy Baby

Some babies are unable to organize their behavior and calm themselves. They benefit greatly from techniques that mimic the time they spent in the uterus.

Some colic – or extreme fussiness in the first 3 months of life – may be attributed to a digestive problem, such as a food sensitivity, overabundant milk supply, or reflux. However, it is thought that a high percentage of colicky babies are fussy because they have difficulty calming themselves. These babies do not have any digestive problems, but rather need assistance to self-regulate their behavior.

Dr. Harvey Karp, a pediatrician, has identified 5 actions that appear to help babies who seem unusually fussy with no apparent physical cause. He aims to duplicate the sensations of the uterus, help babies mature and help trigger a powerful response in the the baby's brain – the calming reflex.

Babies are very snug inside the uterus, experience continuous movement, hear a constant rhythmical heart beat, and suckle as they please. As a result, Dr. Karp suggests the 5 S's:

- **Swaddle** your baby snugly frequently throughout the day and night (not to calm baby but to stop baby from flailing),
- Place baby in a **side** or **stomach** (unless baby is sleeping) position (when a baby is awake, the back position may trigger the Moro or falling reflex, thus making baby feel insecure and likely to shriek as though being dropped)
- **Swing** baby (tiny, quick jiggling motion, not shaking),
- “**Shoosh**” your baby with a rhythmical sound close to baby's ear, and
- Let your baby **suckle** frequently (either at the breast, on a finger or a pacifier).

It is important to try these 5 S's frequently. Don't give up after the first try!

Dr. William Sears, another pediatrician, believes that babies benefit from being held close and nursed frequently during the first 3 months of life. A strong advocate of slings, Dr. Sears claims that “wearing” your baby results in a smarter, more content baby. Both Dr. Sears and Dr. Karp point to cultures in which babies do little crying. For the most part **these babies are held close and carried by an adult most of the day**. As many child development experts confirm, meeting a baby's needs promptly in the first 3 months of life tends to produce children and adults who are more secure and content.

For more information, see:

- *The Happiest Baby on the Block* by Harvey Karp, MD
- *The Fussy Baby Book* by William Sears, MD and Martha Sears, RN

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