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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Swaddling Your Baby¹

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Recently, the ancient infant care practice of swaddling has caught on in some communities around the United States (Meltz, 2006). Swaddling seems to have a soothing effect on crying babies—and as a result, on their parents, too.

Swaddling is a method of wrapping a newborn baby in a cotton sheet or light blanket as is often done by the nurse immediately after a baby is born, restricting the baby's movement. Common wisdom suggests that swaddling gives babies a feeling of security and warmth as they adjust to life outside the womb (Meltz, 2006).

Recent medical research suggests that swaddling has some benefits for infant sleep. In a study of 26 healthy babies, researchers found that swaddling helped decrease arousals during sleep, perhaps enabling babies to go back to sleep on their own (Gerard, Harris, & Thanck, 2002). Another study of 16 infants found that swaddling promoted more sustained sleep and fewer awakenings (Franco et al., 2005).

A word of caution, however. If not done properly, swaddling can be risky (van Gest et al, 2002). A nurse or midwife can help a new mom or dad learn how to do it properly. Swaddling needs to be done safely so the baby is not too warm or circulation is cut off. The baby's face must not be covered, and of course, the baby needs to be

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moved, held and cared for in other loving ways. So, if your baby cries a lot or has trouble sleeping, you may want to talk to your baby's health care provider about the best way to swaddle your infant.

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