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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Practice safe swaddling to protect baby's hips

Many babies take comfort in being swaddled in a blanket. However, swaddling the wrong way can cause hip dislocation.

The cozy feeling of a blanket snugly wrapped around the baby's body resembles the mother's womb. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports safe swaddling of infants that leaves the hips and legs free to move. Studies have found that straightening and tightly swaddling a baby's legs can lead to hip dislocation or hip dysplasia, an abnormal formation of the hip joint where the top of the thigh bone is not held firmly in the socket of the hip.

When swaddling a baby, use the following techniques from the International Hip Dysplasia Institute:

- **Swaddle the baby on a square blanket.** Place the baby's head above the middle of one edge, tuck the right arm down and fold the right side of the blanket over the baby between the left arm and under the left side. Then tuck the left arm down and fold the left edge of the blanket over the baby and under the right side. Fold or twist the bottom of the blanket up and loosely and tuck it under one side of the baby.

- **Swaddle a baby using the diamond shape technique.** Fold one corner of a square blanket down and place the baby with its head in the center above the folded corner. Straighten the right arm and fold the right corner of the blanket over the baby between the left arm and under the left side. Then tuck the left arm down and fold the left corner of the blanket over the baby and under the right side. Fold or twist the bottom of the blanket loosely and tuck it under one side of the baby.

Legs should be able to bend up and out. When using a commercial swaddling blanket, make sure it is loose around the baby's hips and legs.

To reduce the chance of sudden infant death syndrome, parents should place babies on their backs to sleep and keep loose bedding and soft objects out of the crib.

— Trisha Koriath

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