

Moving from wrap to a Sleeping Bag

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How do we know when it's the appropriate time to use wraps or sleeping bags or move from wrapping to using a sleeping bag?

Most parents appropriately start wrapping their newborn babies in hospital with the Nurses' direction and continue the practice at home for a few weeks. Some parents report soon after "my baby doesn't like being wrapped for sleep" and discontinue using them. However, the baby doesn't sleep well unwrapped either. Sometimes the baby appearing to not like being wrapped doesn't actually mean they don't like it, it may mean that they don't like the way they are being wrapped. In fact, in my professional experience I have never met a baby that didn't respond to my comforting wrapping. It's the size, the fabric and the technique that makes the difference.

For an effective wrap:

- *I suggest using a cot sheet, or fabric as big as a flat cot sheet, taut poly cotton or 100% cotton (but not too thick or heavy). You can use muslin if it isn't too stretchy.

- *have a nice big turnover at the top 20-25 cm

- *wrap one arm at a time and have arms facing up towards the face (SIDS recommended) so that when baby is strong enough to roll over they have more flexibility moving their head and neck and can breathe easier.

- * make sure your technique is firm from top to bottom and that you are wrapping baby evenly like a sausage roll. Try not to wrap crisscross like a bandage, this flutes out the bottom of the wrap and baby will be able to wriggle the wrap loose.

I recommend wrapping your baby until they either drop their startle reflex around 4.5 months and it's too hot to wrap or baby starts crawling around the cot despite firm wrapping and firm tucking in. Ask me about my sheet trick, every parent who has seen it loves it! If baby reaches 4.5 months and the weather is comfortable for wrapping, continue it. If what you are doing is working, don't change it.

When dressing baby remember that the wrap is counted as a layer of clothing.

When you decide to drop the wrap I recommend using a sleeping bag straight away. I have found that the time it takes for your baby to adjust to one arm out then two arms out or a looser wrap then no wrap is actually longer than how long it takes your baby to adjust to a sleeping bag.

Generally it takes three days three days to change a habit and therefore three days for your baby to forget about the wrapping and feel comfortable going to sleep in the sleeping bag.

You will need to have a comfortable strategy that you apply consistently and persistently in order for baby to adjust to the sleeping bag in the three days. Naturally if you use the wrap occasionally or are inconsistent with your approach to your settling baby will be confused and not respond well.

I recommend using a sleeping bag until your baby moves from the cot to the big bed for the following reasons:

- It keeps your mobile baby covered over in whatever position they sleep in.
- It prevents their legs getting caught through the bars of the cot.
- It makes it harder to move around under the sheet.
- It makes it a little trickier to stand up.
- It makes it harder for your baby or toddler to climb out of the cot.

There are many types and weights in sleeping bags. You can decide on what fabric and weight you think is appropriate for your baby or toddler and the weather. When choosing a sleeping bag look for ones with zippers only no press studs, as these come undone very easily and allow the sleeping bag to come off.

Tip: Whether you are wrapping or using a sleeping bag I recommend using it for all sleeps wherever your are putting your baby or toddler down to sleep.

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