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# The Man's Guide to Holding a Newborn Baby

Never held a baby before? Here's how to do it like a pro

BY PAIGE FOWLER December 9, 2015



THINKSTOCK



If you're kid-free, the thought of holding a helpless newborn baby can be terrifying.

But follow these steps the next time a relative or friend plunks a tiny bundle of joy into your lap, and you may earn the nickname "The Baby Whisperer."

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## Prepare for the Big Moment

First thing's first: Wash your hands.

Newborns haven't built up an immune system, so they're defenseless to many illnesses. A simple bug that gives you the sniffles can cause them to get seriously sick, says [David Hill, M.D., author of \*Dad to Dad: Parenting Like a Pro\*](#). (Follow these other [5 Health Measures You Need to Take before Meeting a Baby](#), too.)

Next, remove any objects from your upper body that could scratch the baby, like your watch.

Newborns can—and probably will—spit up without warning. Ask the parent if you can borrow a burp cloth—a small towel that newborn moms and dads carry with them at all times—to place between you and the baby. Drape it over your arm and shoulder.

## Use the Right Technique

"Newborns are head-heavy and don't have much neck strength yet, so use the crook of your elbow to support their head," says Laura Jana, M.D., an Omaha-based pediatrician and author of *Heading Home with Your Newborn*.

With that same arm, use your forearm and hand to hold his back, butt, and legs.

Then, pull him close to your chest with your other arm. Babies like to feel as if they're being swaddled.

"The way to not fumble a newborn is hold it tight against your body like a football," [Dr. Hill](#) says.

You want to hold the baby securely while keeping your body loose. If you're too rigid, he won't be able to relax and will start to squirm.

Don't feel comfortable taking the baby from his parent while standing? Sit down on a couch or arm chair and make the transfer there instead.

## Quiet a Fussy Baby

Your instinct may be to pass the child back to a parent like a hot potato when he starts to cry or whine. But some simple actions on your part can turn his screams into coos.

"Babies can sense your stress, so even though you may be feeling nervous, talk to the baby in a calm voice," Dr. Jana says. It'll make him feel safe and secure.

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Making a soft "shushing" sound can help, too. This white noise mimics the sound of the womb, the baby's home for the past 9 months.

Next, get up and move—motion is very soothing for babies.

"Keep the baby close to your body and stroll around," she adds.

Just avoid bouncing, since it can be jarring for very young babies. You can sway or rock slightly side to side while continuing to talk or shush the baby.

And if the baby still won't stop crying after 5 to 7 minutes? He may be hungry or tired, or need a diaper change. Go ahead and hand him back to mom or dad at that point.

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