

A Guide to Burping Your Baby

By Elisa Cinelli Published on April 07, 2022 Medically reviewed by Paul A. Rufo, MD, MMSc

There is so much to learn about taking care of an infant. As a new parent, you have to [master diaper changing](#), swaddling, and latching baby on correctly, if you choose to breastfeed. Burping your baby is another important skill to learn when you bring your baby home.

Burping is a normal and healthy part of a baby's routine. You may not have ever thought about helping someone burp before you had a baby, but infants are pretty helpless and very often need assistance bringing up a burp. "Babies can swallow air when they are feeding and burping allows them to get rid of this air," explains [Loretta Cody](#), MD, a Connecticut-based pediatrician.¹

We tapped a few experts to learn about all kinds of burping—after breastfeeding, bottle feeding, formula feeding, and more.

Why Do I Need to Burp My Baby?

There are a few reasons why it's important to burp your baby after a feeding. Babies are "inefficient eaters" and typically swallow air bubbles along with their formula or breast milk, and this gas can make them feel uncomfortable if they can't get it out easily.¹ "Imagine drinking a lot of carbonated water or soda and having that feeling you get when you need to burp," says Dr. Cody. "That is exactly why babies need to burp, they need to get rid of that air [that's trapped in their stomachs]."

If your baby is not able to burp, they may cry from discomfort, spit-up, or [be extra gassy](#).¹²

How To Burp a Baby

Burping your baby after they have had some milk should be a regular part of your feeding routine. To bring up the air bubbles they have swallowed, you will want to gently pat their back between the shoulder blades or a little below that.¹

There are a few different positions in which you can hold your baby to help them to burp.

Over the Shoulder

The classic burping position is to hold the baby so their head is over your shoulder and their belly is resting against you. Throwing a burp cloth over your shoulder to catch any [spit-up that comes up with the burp](#) is usually a good idea. Otherwise, you may not even know it's there and walk around with a milk-stained shirt all day! (And if this does happen, don't fret. It's happened to many, many parents before you).

Sitting Up

If the over-the-shoulder position doesn't work for you or your little one, consider having your baby

sit up on your lap. This is often the most effective way to burp a baby.

In this position, you should support their head by cupping your hand under their chin with a thumb and finger on each side of the jaw. Lean their weight slightly forward, and they might just burp without any patting. If not, go ahead and pat their back.

Across Your Lap

Sometimes burping works best if you lie your baby face-down across your lap. Just make sure to support your infant's head and be careful not to restrict their breathing.

When Should I Burp My Baby?

When to burp your baby depends on their specific needs. As you continue to feed your baby, you will begin to learn how often they need a burp. Generally, this will be roughly every 10 to 15 minutes through a feeding. "For a [bottle-fed baby](#) this may be halfway through the feeding and again after the feeding is completed," notes Dr. Cody. "For a breastfed baby, [you would burp them] after nursing on each breast."

How Long Should I Burp My Baby?

Some babies will burp right away before you even pat them on the back, and others will need a little more time. "Usually, you will pat gently on the baby's back until you get the desired result—a nice burp," says Dr. Cody. "But if you don't get a burp, changing positions can help."

One burp might not be all that your baby's got in them, either. "You want to keep patting their back until they stop burping," notes [Kim Langdon](#), MD, an OB/GYN with over 20 years of experience.

What Do I Do If My Baby Doesn't Burp?

Burps can be elusive at times, but this does not usually indicate any problem. It could be that your baby just does not need to burp. "If you've tried different positions and [they haven't burped] and your baby is not squirming or uncomfortable, they may be totally fine [without one]," says Dr. Cody. "Some babies do not take in as much air so if you have shifted positions and you have a happy baby, don't worry if you don't get a burp."

However, if your baby is spitting up or [showing signs of discomfort](#), you may need to reevaluate your burping technique. Try keeping your baby propped up for a few minutes after their feed so the milk can make its way down and the air bubbles will move on up.² If spitting up is the main issue, you can try for a burp a few times while keeping your baby propped up in between each try.

Any pain or discomfort after feeding that causes your baby to cry may indicate trapped air. Try burping your baby more frequently throughout feedings if you notice this pattern. If there is an isolated incident where a burp just won't come up, you can also wait to see if they pass gas. "Your baby may relieve themselves of some of that air out the other end," notes Dr. Cody.

If this is a repeated issue, reach out to your baby's pediatrician to discuss any other medical issues that can cause these symptoms, including aerophagia (swallowing excessive air while feeding) or

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Babies usually need to burp a couple of times during a feeding. They swallow air along with their milk, and this air needs to be released to keep them from feeling uncomfortable or gassy.² Sitting your baby up and patting them on the back midway through a feeding and once at the end can help them burp. If you can't get a burp, try switching positions, and if they crying or wincing with discomfort, try burping more frequently or keeping them upright after a feed.² If your baby spits up often or seems to be in pain after feedings, reach out to their pediatrician.²

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1. [How to Breastfeed](#). National Health Service.
2. [Why Babies Spit Up](#). American Academy of Pediatrics.



By [Elisa Cinelli](#)

Elisa is a well-known parenting writer who is passionate about providing research-based content to help parents make the best decisions for their families. She has written for well-known sites including POPSUGAR and Scary Mommy, among others.

Thanks for your feedback!