

the big burp theory

Don't be nervous if your baby doesn't let out a full-on belch with every meal. **by dina santorelli**



Some babies need very little burping, some need a lot.

Now your little one is perched over your shoulder ready for that big, tummy-easing, all-important, life's-happiness-hinges-upon-it burp. You pat his tiny, wrinkled back, and then you wait...

And wait...

And wait...

A quick glance at the clock shows you've patted that little back for nearly 15 minutes and nothing, not even the slightest hint of an air bubble. You've changed positions twice, even varied your back-patting style – low, high, circular. Help!

"Parents think that some horrible thing will happen if their baby doesn't burp," says Dr. Thomas DeStefani, chairman of pediatrics for Loyola University Health System in Maywood, Ill. "But different babies feed differently. Some need very little burping, some need a lot of burping, and some babies need a lot of burping sometimes and very little at other times.

Thus, the first lesson of Burping 101 – not every baby will burp every time.

the importance of air

While burping a baby was once rigidly documented, today this rite of feeding has become less about standardization and more about individualization, with its occurrence more contingent upon each baby's tendencies and preferences than a set schedule. "There's a lot of controversy about how important burping is," says Dr. Diane Barsky, medical director of the pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "It's a mis->

burping a newborn child can be a daunting experience for a first-time parent, and chances are you have approached this event with some very spirited research and preparation. Perhaps you've read all the pertinent "What to Expect" chapters and secured the appropriate accoutrements, which, depending upon your inclination, might include a Boppy and an assortment of spit cloths.

"It's a misconception that you have to frequently burp a baby during a feeding."



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newborn baby

conception that you have to frequently burp a baby during a feeding. Babies are really efficient feeders and don't swallow lots of air when they nurse, so they have very little need to burp. Bottle-feeding is a little different. There's no airless bottle system, so babies are much more likely to swallow air with bottle-feeding, so burping is a way for them to bring up the air."

Indeed, as a baby feeds, air may ride down his esophagus with the breast milk or formula and into his

stomach, which ranges in size between 5 to 7 centimeters, and become trapped.

"Swallowing air is a normal physiological function," says Dr. Patricia Keener, professor of clinical pediatrics at Indiana University School of Medicine and associate chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis.

Burping is the natural process by which a baby expels that air. Some babies will let out a burp by them-

assuming the position

While there are many positions for burping a baby, these are some of the most popular:

- **Over the shoulder:** Sit upright and hold your baby against your chest, so that your baby's chin is resting on your shoulder as your support his head and back with one hand. Gently pat the baby's back.
- **Sitting on your lap:** Sit the baby on your lap sideways, supporting the baby's chest and head by keeping his chin tucked into the angle of your hand, between your thumb and index finger. Lean the baby over slightly and gently pat his back.
- **Lying on your lap:** While sitting, position your legs so that they are together, but one is slightly higher than the other. Lie your baby down with his chest on the higher leg and legs on the other, and support his head, which should be slightly elevated from the rest of his body. Gently pat or rub the baby's back.
- **The walk and burp:** This position is similar to the over-the-shoulder one, only the movement of your walking helps to jostle the baby and expel any swallowed air. Again, be sure to give proper support to your baby's head.