



# A bit of a tap and jiggle

## SHARLENE POOLE COMES OVER ALL REGAL WHEN IT COMES TO BURPING BABY

When I was a student at the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education 14 years ago, an article about burping babies would have seemed silly, burping was common practice and something that went without saying. Burping has always been advised by our 'teachers', but it didn't occur to me back then that it was such a huge part of a newborn baby's day.

As a maternity nurse in the UK, the first few babies I worked with had what I would now call, 'adequate' burping – a gentle over the shoulder tap and pat or occasionally the sitting position with several strokes and taps. These days I am

known by some as 'the burping Queen' and the babies today are getting the full monty!

The difference that good burping makes to a baby's happiness is so great that it has become the technique I teach most.

### Why is burping so important?

There are a number of reasons and some are more obvious than others. Most common is the pain they can experience when they have wind. Some babies naturally have very little wind and can cope with just a basic burping technique, but the majority, in my opinion, need a little more help.

## The breast-feeding mother's diet

This is an interesting subject and one I've learnt a lot about since working with mothers on a 24-hour basis – seeing what they ate and how it affected the baby several hours later. When working in India I was most impressed that my client, who was in a private hospital, received a visit from a dietician who gave her a handout with what foods to avoid and be wary of when breast feeding. This prompted me to create something similar for my New Zealand clients but more suited to a Western diet!

If you think your baby may be suffering from excess wind, keep a note of what you eat each day, then, over a period of time, you may be able to link particular foods to your baby's discomfort.

Some common foods that I have witnessed to be 'windy' foods are:

- Grapes
- Raw tomatoes
- Onion (especially raw) and leeks
- Large portions of greens in one meal (peas, spinach, etc)
- Spicy food
- Dairy foods (if consuming a lot on a daily basis)
- Strawberries
- Kiwifruit
- Rich and oily food

You do not have to eliminate all these foods from your diet but I suggest monitoring the effects these have. It is then a matter of being wise and eating in moderation, a little isn't likely to be harmful.

Inadequate burping results in discomfort, but can also be the cause of poor feeding, sleeping and settling and these habits eventually cause mothers and babies distress. Relieving a baby of this discomfort is giving them something they cannot do alone.

In countries I have worked in such as South Africa, India and Indonesia, you can see that women still living a 'traditional' life don't have to burp their babies to quite the same extent because they carry their babies around either strapped to their bodies or in a papoose. The constant jiggling they get from moving with the adult body dislodges and takes care of the burps. But in the western world we sleep our babies in beds and don't have the freedom to live like that. Therefore we have had to learn the art of burping before expecting a baby to be able to feed well and sleep soundly.

### Some possible causes of wind

- A fast 'let-down' (breast milk released from the milk ducts) from a breast-feeding mother resulting in the baby gulping to cope.
- Incorrect positioning on the breast.
- The diet of a breast-feeding mother (see notes above).
- Bottle teats with a hole too large or small for the baby.
- Or a more serious problem such as reflux.

### The 'Queen's' technique

**1** Whether you are breast- or bottle-feeding, I believe babies need to be checked for a burp halfway through a feed and in some cases several times during a feed.

**2** When taking babies off the breast or bottle, you need to lie them as flat as possible, across your knees or on the sofa beside you, for 10-20 seconds. Think of the burps leveling out and merging together to create a big burp instead of lots of tiny ones. Then sit them up nice and straight on your knee, not in-between your knees. In deep, upward strokes on the back encourage the burp up, followed by several quick taps to their back. Or you can lift the baby over your shoulder, stroking and tapping the back until you hear that wonderful relieving sound.

**3** I also find that when you lie a baby flat – during a nappy change or a play on the floor – the burps often move up, causing them discomfort. This causes parents to think that their babies don't like nappy changes or floor play, but they just need to be burped again, especially after you have lifted their legs for a change or when they kick their legs about during play. Sitting them up on the changing mat or floor can work, you don't always have to pick them up to get these burps up because they are close to the surface.

So check for those burps... you'll be surprised just how often and how easily you can relieve a baby of their discomfort. If you are still having problems, or would like to check if something like reflux is affecting your baby, talk with your health professional. Contact me at [www.tbonz.co.nz](http://www.tbonz.co.nz) if you think it is just bad wind and need help with the techniques. ■

With over a decade of international experience, Sharlene has carved out a unique career in child care – specialising as a newborn advisor. Sharlene has an established post-natal care business and continues to work around the world. Due to demand, Sharlene is currently developing a series of DVDs for her international market and will share advice with readers through this column. If you have any questions for Sharlene, see [www.tbonz.co.nz](http://www.tbonz.co.nz) **TBONZ** [www.littlemiracles.co.nz](http://www.littlemiracles.co.nz) has information on the support options Sharlene provides.