

# Crying Baby

To say that crying is a big challenge to early parenting is an understatement, especially when it is 3 AM, you haven't gotten any sleep, and your baby is still crying!

With crying, there are no firm rules as to what causes it and what you can do to get your baby to stop. As you get to know your baby, you will get better at knowing what causes your baby to cry and what will get him to stop. Soon you will be able to tell hungry cries from boredom cries, hurt cries from angry cries. And then of course there are times when your baby will cry seemingly for no reason at all.

## Why is my baby crying?

When your baby cries, check the obvious causes such as hunger, discomfort, over-stimulation, and boredom.

**HUNGER:** If it is possible that your baby is hungry, try feeding first.

- Newborns need short (20 minutes), frequent (every 2 hours) feedings. The feedings provide comfort and closeness as well as keeping your baby's tummy full.

**DISCOMFORT:** Your baby may be bothered by something.

- **Illness:** If your child is sick, there are usually other signs, such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, decreased appetite, or a stuffy nose. Some things cause discomfort without other obvious symptoms. Sometimes a baby can get scratched or pinched or get something stuck in the throat. Make sure your baby's eyes look OK and that he can swallow. A doctor should examine your baby if you are worried that something is wrong.
- **Clothes:** Check clothing to see if it is too tight. Sometimes threads from the baby's clothes get wound around his fingers or toes and cut off circulation.
- **Temperature:** Your baby may be too hot or too cold.
- **Diapers:** Unless they have been trained to cry about dirty diapers or unless they have a bad diaper rash, babies generally don't mind wet or soiled diapers. For babies in cloth diapers, check to see if a diaper pin is sticking them.

**OVER-STIMULATION:** Over-stimulation from playing and handling can often cause overtiredness, which will result in crying.

- Some babies like the secure feeling of being tightly swaddled in a blanket—as in the hospital.
- If you know your baby is not hungry, sucking on a pacifier or a finger (his or yours) can be just the thing to relax your baby and put him to sleep.
- If you think your baby is not ill, your baby may simply need to cry himself to sleep.

**BOREDOM:** Crying can also mean that your baby wants a change in scenery or activity.

- Babies can often be distracted by lively music, by your dancing with them in your arms, or by a noisy rattle or toy.
- Car or stroller rides often work wonders for a crying baby and for parents as well. A baby swing may also work.
- Since babies love to see the sights and to be held close in someone's arms, walking your baby from room to room is generally a good cure for crying.
- Try using a front pack to free up your hands for little chores while you are walking. (While this is a good cure for crying, it can injure your back—don't overdo it!)

**RELAX!** As you will notice, your baby can tell when you are tense and will often also get tense and cry. Quiet music, gentle rocking, soft singing, or talking often help, as does a warm bath or a gentle massage.

## What is colic?

Colic is a term used to describe a baby who cries daily for several hours at a time, usually at the same time each day. There is no known cause and no sure cure for colic other than time. Almost all babies outgrow colic by 3 to 4 months of age.

If your baby won't stop crying, you may want to try the following ideas to help calm your baby.

- Try giving your baby a pacifier, a ride in the car, or a warm bath.
- A steady sound (white noise) such as a fan, a dishwasher, clothes dryer, or a vacuum cleaner may calm your baby.

## What if I get angry and frustrated?

NEVER hurt your baby. Ask a spouse, friend, neighbor, or relative to give you a break when you need it. If your baby has been crying and you are getting so angry that you are afraid you might hurt your baby, call your healthcare provider or an emergency room and talk about the problem.

## When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call if:

- Your baby seems to be ill or in pain.
- Your baby has cried constantly for 2 hours or more.
- You are feeling angry, resentful, or exhausted and you are afraid you might hurt your baby.

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