

Developing Children, Developing Parents Coping with Crying

Crying is normal and it is your baby's way to get your attention. Your baby will cry if he needs something like food, a diaper change, a cuddle, or some comfort. Your baby will also cry when he is not feeling well.

You cannot spoil your baby if you pick him up when he cries. If you pick him up and comfort him every time he cries during his first six months, he will tend to cry less during the next 6 months of his life.

You will soon learn that your baby cries in a different way for different reasons. A crying baby does not mean that a baby is "bad" or that he is angry with you. At times, it is hard to figure out why your baby is crying. Sometimes your baby cannot stop crying, and nothing you do to comfort him seems to help.

What You Can Do: Calming a Crying Baby

Making your baby comfortable

- Try different ways of holding and talking to your baby. Some babies need conversations that are more energetic, and some need more gentle tones.
- All babies need to be handled gently. Some babies like to be snuggled, and others like a looser touch. Find what works for you and your baby.
- Try holding your baby close to your chest, skin to skin. Hearing your heartbeat may soothe him.
- Offer him a favourite blanket or soft toy while you are cuddling.
- Check the back of his neck to see if he is too hot (sweaty) or cold (cool to touch)
- Check his diaper; babies like to be clean and dry.
- Encourage him to suck.
- Give him a gentle back rub.

Gentle motion

- Gently walk or rock with your baby.
- Use a baby swing if you have one and make sure the safety strap is fastened.
- Take him for a walk in a stroller.
- Carry him in a sling or a baby carrier.
- Some babies like to go for a car ride. Make sure he is in an infant car seat that is right for his age, the straps are properly fastened, and the seat is properly installed in the vehicle.

Sound and music

- Try humming or singing a lullaby.
- The sound of a vacuum cleaner, the clothes dryer, or a dishwasher can sometimes calm a baby.

Activity and noise

- Is the radio always playing? Is the TV always on? Are people always coming and going? Too much activity can make babies too excited and that can lead to fussing and crying.
- Some babies love lots of activity. Other babies find that too much activity can be overwhelming and may need to move to a quieter place for a while. Watch how your child responds and you will soon learn what he needs.

The Patterns of Crying

Normal and healthy babies have patterns of crying that are very alike. Parents find it helpful to know:

- It is normal for baby's crying to increase at about two to four weeks of age.
- Crying increases until about two to four months of age, and will then start to decrease.
- Crying can come and go without warning and for no obvious reason.
- Sometimes babies just cannot stop crying, even though you might try many ways to help them.
- Crying can make a healthy baby look like she he is in pain even if she he isn't.
- Crying can go on for 30 to 40 minutes or longer.
- Crying can happen more in the afternoon and evening.

What You Can Do: When Your Baby Cannot Stop Crying

- Stay calm. Remember that most babies have times during the day when they cannot stop crying. Some babies cry more often and others cry for longer periods.
- If you get upset or angry, place your baby in a safe place, such as his crib, leave the room, and gently shut the door.
- Take a 15 minute break and do something to help yourself calm down before you try to comfort your baby again. Letting your baby cry for a few minutes will not harm her him. Getting upset and shaking your baby can be very, very harmful. Many babies who have been shaken have died or have brain damage that lasts forever.

Colic

If your baby cries for a long time, more than three hours a day, and more than three times a week, it is usually called *colic*. *Colic* usually follows the same pattern as normal crying:

Take good care of yourself. Colic is very hard on parents. Try to get as much help as you can and keep responding to your baby, even if it does not seem to be working. He will know that you are trying.

Never Shake A Baby

The most common reason given when someone shakes a baby is that they were very frustrated or upset. Make sure that everyone who looks after your baby knows that they should **never** shake a baby.

Find someone who can help you when you need to take a break. Arrange for someone who can help you regularly with childcare so you can get some rest. Ask a friend or relative you trust to be available to help you right away when the crying is too much for you to handle. Keep their phone number nearby.

Remember, Health Link Alberta is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866- Sometimes just talking to someone can help you calm down.

Soothers

Babies suck to eat, and they also need to suck to soothe themselves when they are tired or upset. Babies have less need to suck as they get older. Your baby may suck on his fingers or fists, or you may decide to use a soother. If you decide to use a soother, here are a few things to remember:

- Wait until your baby is breastfeeding well before giving him a soother.
- Pick a one-piece soother with a soft nipple that flattens to the roof of your baby's mouth. This kind of soother will not damage your baby's teeth.
- Keep the soother clean by washing it after each use with hot, soapy water and rinse it well.
- Never tie a soother around your baby's neck – it can strangle your baby and cause death.

- Never dip your baby's soother in sugar, honey, or in drinks that contain sugar or alcohol. Doing this can cause cavities and make your baby very sick.