



What to do When your Newborn Cries

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In any given day, the average newborn cries for more than two hours.

Decoding the crying

A feeding or diaper change may be enough to stop the crying in its tracks. Sometimes it takes more effort and sometimes there is nothing you can do but comfort your baby as the crying runs its course.

I'm hungry

Most newborns eat every few hours around the clock. If your baby is hungry do not delay the feed. Some babies become frantic when hunger strikes. They may get so worked up by the time the feeding begins that they gulp air with the milk, which may cause spitting up or more crying. To avoid such frenzy, respond to early signs of hunger. Rocking, cuddling or another soothing activity may help calm your baby before the feeding. If your baby begins to gulp during the feeding, take a break.

I need to burp

During and after each feeding, take time to burp your baby. But do not stop there. Your baby may need to burp between feedings as well.

I pooped

For some babies, a wet or soiled diaper is a sure-fire way to trigger crying. Gas or indigestion may have the same effect. Check your baby's diaper often to make sure it is clean and dry.

I'd rather be bundled

Some babies feel more secure in a swaddle wrap. Try the "baby burrito":

- Spread a receiving blanket or other small, lightweight blanket on the floor.
- Fold down one corner of the blanket.
- Lay your baby face-up on the blanket, with his or her head on the folded corner.

- Pick up the right or left side of the blanket. Pull it over your baby and tuck it snugly beneath him or her on the other side.
- Fold up the bottom of the blanket to cover your baby's feet.
- Wrap the other side of the blanket around your baby. Keep his or her head and neck exposed.

It's time for a nap

Tired babies are often fussy. Make sure your baby is getting enough sleep. For newborns, this often means up to 16 hours – or even more – every day. Look for early signs of drowsiness, such as fussing, drooping eyelids and rubbing the eyes. Responding to these early cues may help you avoid full-blown bawling if your baby becomes overtired.

Where is everyone?

If your baby is feeling lonely, simply seeing you, hearing your voice or being cuddled may stop the crying. In fact, babies who are held or carried during most of their waking hours are less fussy than those left in a crib or infant seat. Some babies who squirm and struggle when you try to hold them respond to gentle massage or light pats on the back.

I want to move

Sometimes a rocking session or rhythmic walk through the house is enough to soothe a crying baby. In other cases, a change of position is all that is needed. Keeping safety precautions in mind, try a baby swing or vibrating infant seat. Weather permitting; head outdoors with the stroller. You may even want to buckle up for a ride in the car.

Who turned up the heat?

A baby who is too hot or cold is likely to be uncomfortable. Add or remove a layer of your baby's clothing as needed.

What did you feed me?

If you are breastfeeding your baby, he or she may be fussier than usual after you eat spicy or gas-producing foods. Too much caffeine may be an issue as well. If you suspect a certain food is causing trouble, avoid it for several days to see if it makes a difference.

I'd really like to suck on something

Sucking is a natural reflex. For many babies, it is a comforting, soothing activity. If your baby is not hungry, try a clean finger or pacifier.

Enough already

Too much noise, movement and visual stimulation may drive your baby to tears. Move to a calmer environment or place your baby in the crib. "White noise" – such as a recording of ocean waves or the monotonous sound of an electric fan, vacuum cleaner or ticking clock may help your baby relax.

It's just that time of day

Many babies have predictable periods of fussiness during the day. There may be little you can do to prevent these episodes.

Colic

Some people say that infants have colic if they cry more than some specified amount of crying. By far the most common such definition is called Wessel's "rule of threes." This rule states that if your infant cries more than three hours a day for more than three days a week for more than three weeks, then your infant has "colic." Although it is widely used, it is an unfortunate rule because (1) it does not tell you anything about your infant other than that he or she cries a lot (and you knew that already); (2) it does not explain anything and (3) it implies that something is wrong or abnormal with your baby, with you, or with the way you are caring for your baby. The point is that there is nothing different between a baby who cries three hours and five minutes a day or one that cries two hours and fifty-five minutes a day. And the irony is that Dr. Morris Wessel, who is credited with this definition, never ever intended it to say who did and did not have colic! He just made an

arbitrary distinction between infants who cried more and those who cried less so that he could begin to try to understand the increased crying normal infants did in the first months of life.

The problem with the word 'colic' is this: most people think some infants have colic, and others do not have colic, but we now know is that all infants have those features of crying (the increasing and decreasing crying curve, the unexpected crying times, unsoothable crying, and so on).

Taking Care of Yourself

It is tough to listen to your baby cry. To take the best care of your baby, it is important to take care of yourself too.

- Take a break.** When you have done what you can, ask your spouse or another loved one to take over for a while. Take advantage of baby-sitting offers from friends or neighbours. Even an hour on your own can help renew your coping strength.

- Make healthy lifestyle choices.** Eat healthfully. Make time for exercise, such as a brisk daily walk. If you can, sleep when the baby sleeps – even during the day. Avoid alcohol and other drugs.

- Remember that it is temporary.** For most babies, crying spells often peak at about six weeks and then gradually decrease.

- Recognize your limits.** If your baby's crying is causing you to lose control, put the baby in a safe place – such as a crib – and go to another room to collect yourself. Contact your midwife, doctor, a local crisis intervention service or a mental health help line for support.