Newborn Crying

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WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY NEWBORN CRIES?

One of the most important things you learn early on as a parent is what to do when your baby cries. Crying is their first form of communication. They cry when they are hungry or uncomfortable. Many babies want to be held close a lot of the time. Holding your baby will not spoil them! It comforts them so they feel safe and secure.

Newborns also cry when they don't feel well. If you have tried the suggestions below and baby is still crying, or behaving differently than usual, call your pediatric primary care provider.

WHY IS MY BABY CRYING?

- Your baby may be hungry. Offer breast or bottle if the last feeding seemed light or was one and a half to two hours ago.
- Your baby may be too hot or too cold. If you're hot or cold, they might be too. Feel their neck for heat or sweat. Try taking off or adding a layer of clothing.
- Your baby's diaper may be wet.
- Sometimes babies get bored and need a change of position or location, so they have something new to look at.
- Sometimes your baby needs to be near you or hear your voice.
- Your baby may be sick or in pain. Check for fever. If there is one, contact your pediatric primary care provider. Check for other sources of discomfort such as a piece of hair wrapped tightly around baby's finger or toe. Baby could also be constipated.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Your baby was recently inside mom's body: safe, cozy, and warm. They were constantly rocked and listened to the loud "whooshing" of mom's blood and heartbeat—there was

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noise and motion all the time. They are adjusting to new sensations now. Here are some ideas of things to try that recreate a "womblike" experience. Some babies may only need one of these suggestions, but others may need many at once:

- Try an infant carrier that holds baby close to your body.
- Go for a walk (fresh air and a change of scene are a great distraction) or a drive in the car (many babies like the motion).
- "White noise" may help. Turn on the vacuum cleaner or a fan or try making a "shushing" noise in their ear. Some babies even like a loud shushing. There are also white noise apps.
- Some babies like to be in motion. Try up and down or side to side. Find what works or try a swing for a short break. Do not leave the baby in the swing for a long time.
- Swaddle baby. Some babies like to be held tightly.
- Try changing baby's position. Place them over your shoulder or knee.
- Try skin-to-skin contact.
- Try a pacifier. (You may need to try several shapes/brands.)
- Sing. It might help you soothe yourself, too!

WHAT TO DO WHEN I'VE TRIED THESE SUGGESTIONS AND MY BABY WON'T STOP CRYING?

Taking in everything around them is tiring. By the end of the day your baby may just need to cry. Some experts and parents believe that babies cry to release tension. A crying baby can be stressful. Some points to remember:

- **Take care of yourself.** It is exhausting caring for a baby who is upset and crying. Ask for help.
- **Do not pick up your baby if you are feeling angry or frustrated.** Leave them in a safe place like a crib and take a break.
- ***Never shake your baby.*** Remember that your baby is doing their best to

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communicate the only way they know how. If you feel you are at your breaking point, call a friend, a family member, or a local parent support warmline or hotline for support. You can also call The Fussy Baby Network for support: 1-888-431-BABY (2229).

WHAT DO I DO WHEN MY BABY'S CRYING SEEMS UNPREDICTABLE AND PROLONGED?

Fussy babies are *very* common. Some babies are difficult to soothe and may have colic. A baby is colicky if they cry for more than three hours on three days of any given week.[1] Colic can affect babies whether they are breastfed or bottle-fed. In the first six weeks, 17%–25% of babies have colic. Babies typically cry less by 12 weeks old.[2]

I CAN'T STAND IT IF MY BABY CRIES FOR MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES—HELP!

Many parents feel this way. When older children or grown-ups cry it's usually because they are sad, angry, or in pain. When a baby cries it often feels like there is no reason for the crying. Many parents feel guilty or frustrated when they are unable to soothe their baby. This doesn't mean you've failed as a parent. Remember: You are not to blame for baby's crying! They are just going through a period of fussiness. Crying and colic always get better and babies don't stay fussy forever.

Reference:

1. Wolke, D., Bilgin, A., & Samara, M. (2017). Systematic review and meta-analysis: Fussing and crying durations and prevalence of colic in infants. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 185, 55–61. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2017.02.020

2. Wolke et al (2017).

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

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