

# SOOTHING YOUR BABY

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## Young Babies

New babies and young babies do cry. This is normal. But, there is no sound more stressful or frustrating to a parent than the sound of their baby crying. Most people know that newborn babies and babies under a year old cry often. However, knowing that babies cry does not make it any less stressful for you or for your baby. You want to know why your baby is crying and you want to know how to calm your baby. The good news is that crying is actually good. During the first year of life

Babies cry for many reasons. Sometimes it is hard to figure out why your baby is crying. This is crying is one of the ways your baby will be able to communicate with you. true for all parents, especially if this is your first baby. Some babies cry when they are lonely. Some cry very hard when they are wet or hungry. Some babies do not like loud sounds. All parents get upset when their baby cries. The good news is that you can help your baby calm down. Babies respond to different soothing techniques. Some babies like to be rocked; others like to hear a quiet song or the hum of a vacuum cleaner.

When your baby first comes home he will cry to let you know what he needs. He could be hungry, or tired, too hot or too cold, or sitting in a diaper that needs to be changed. Babies also cry to have their emotional needs met. Your baby will want to be near you and may cry because he is afraid to be alone. He may want your attention or company. The noise level in your house may be too loud for him, or the lights too bright. He will cry to let you know his reaction to his environment. You may not understand all his different cries at first. As your baby gets older and you are with him more, you will learn the meaning of his different cries. You will also discover the things that soothe him.

In a short time, usually within a few weeks you will begin to understand your new baby's cries. You will be able to tell when she wants company, is hungry or is tired. When your baby cries you should pick her up and find out what she wants. Don't worry-- picking up your baby at this age cannot spoil her! When you pick up your baby she learns that the world is a good place. She feels emotionally secure and safe in your warm arms. She learns that her cry is her special way to communicate with you. She learns that if she cries you will come to help her. This is the beginning of your baby's ability to "talk" with you. It is the beginning of her special bond with you and the beginning of her emotional health.

Getting to know your child's special way of "talking" with you will happen by trial and error. When your baby cries there are simple things you can check for: Try them one at a time. Some babies become upset when we try two or three ideas at a time.

## First Look:

- Is your baby's diaper wet or dirty? A wet diaper can hurt your baby's skin making a rash. Clean your baby and put on a clean diaper. This may calm your crying baby.
- Is your baby hungry? Try feeding your baby. Newborns like to eat frequently.
- Sometimes your baby isn't hungry, but he may still need to suck on something. Pacifiers help babies to calm themselves. Ask your Doctor if a pacifier is OK. Make sure that the pacifier you give your baby is clean.
- Is the room too hot or cold, or is your baby overdressed or underdressed? Try changing your baby's clothing or the temperature of the room.
- Is your baby lonely or afraid? Try holding her and comforting her with soft touch.
- Is your baby over-stimulated? Try turning down the lights and reducing the noise level in your house.

Is your baby still crying?

**Try Simple Movements:** Babies love to move.

- Try walking with your baby quietly in the house.
- Stand and rock your baby slowly side-to-side.
- Rock your baby while seated in a Rocking Chair. This will calm you too.
- Dance gently with your baby. Use quiet music.
- Place your baby in a carriage and go for a walk. If the weather is stormy, push the carriage back and forth in the house. This can be soothing for you and your baby.
- Put your baby in an infant carrier or sling and do some light chores. The movement is similar to the feelings he felt in your womb.
- If you have a car, take your baby for a ride. Always use a car seat!

Is your baby still crying?

**Try Quiet Sounds:** Many babies love quiet sounds

- Babies like to hear sounds over and over. They like sounds that remind them of things they heard when you were pregnant.
- Listen to the sounds of the ocean or a waterfall,
- Turn on the laundry washer or dryer,
- Put your baby on your chest. Let him hear your heartbeat.
- Turn on the vacuum cleaner.
- Sing a lullaby you know or make up a new one for your baby. Babies like everything. They are not critics.

A Special Note about Infant Massage and Swaddling

There is almost always something which will stop a baby crying. Some babies like to be wrapped up tightly (swaddled), or enjoy infant massage. There is a proper way to use swaddling and infant massage. Never swaddle or massage your baby unless an expert in these skills has shown you how to swaddle or massage properly. If you swaddle your baby or use infant massage wrong you may accidentally hurt your baby. Ask your health care provider to recommend an expert for you.

**If you have tried several of these ideas and your baby is still crying very hard and loudly here are some things to check:**

**Second Look: Is your baby sick?**

- Take the baby's temperature, and call a health care provider if there is a fever or if you're not sure about any other symptoms. Be sure that your baby's health care provider shows you the correct way to take a baby's temperature.
- If your baby cries for hours at a time, be sure to have him or her checked out by a pediatrician.
- Crying accompanying symptoms such as: fever, loss of appetite, vomiting, skin rash, diarrhea and coughing, is more likely to be the result of an infection. When small babies become ill they may get sick very fast. If your baby has these symptoms or if you think your baby is sick, call your health care provider immediately.
- When teeth are coming in, your babies' gums become swollen and red. Your baby may also tug on her ear or even seem to catch a cold. Your baby may drool a lot, be cranky, clingy and have trouble sleeping. Medical treatment is not usually necessary. Try giving him or her something to chew on such as a chilled (not frozen) teething toy. Ask your health care provider for suggestions when your baby's teeth first come in.
- Some babies have Colic. They cry for several hours during the day. They often have gas pains. Babies with Colic have a very high pitched sounding cry.. They may draw up their legs and become red in the face. This crying usually happens at the same time every day, late afternoon or evening. Colic can start as early as three weeks and continue until about twelve to 16 weeks. The cause of colic is not known. You should try some of the ideas you read about to calm your baby. **Do not use medicines or change your baby's feeding schedules to give your baby relief from Colic. Contact your doctor if your baby continues to cry.**
- Babies who have been exposed to drugs in the womb are hard to calm. Follow your doctor's instruction for calming your baby.

## Older babies

From the age of about three months, babies can see more of what happens around them. They use sounds to let us know what they need. By now, you can probably tell what your baby needs by how he is crying. Now your baby will now add some new "cries". He may cry from boredom, fear, frustration or teething. You will still need to learn what some of his cries mean by trial and error. The following ideas may help.

**Boredom** - make sure that your baby has many interesting toys within reach. Spend time talking to your baby. Sing to him. Read to him. Play with him.

**Loneliness** - babies love to be around people. Sometimes your baby will cry for your attention. He wants to be with you. Babies cannot entertain themselves for more than a few minutes. Keeping your baby near you will give you many chances to talk about what you are doing. It will give your baby a chance to learn about his world. Keeping your baby interested in new things will reduce his loneliness and crying.

**Separation** - your baby may cry if he fears being away from you, sees a stranger, or he is in a strange place. Always be supportive and never make fun of your child's fears. Calm your baby with soothing words in a gentle tone of voice and cuddle him. When you are away from your baby let him know that you will come back soon. Whenever possible, try to look in on your baby so that he will know that you are not far away.

**Frustration** - your baby will cry when they want to do things that they are not yet able to or when they do not get their own way. Childproof your home so that you can let your baby explore in safety. When your baby is frustrated because he cannot have something

you think is dangerous, offer him an alternative. Try distracting him with new sounds, toys or activities. This can help to reduce their frustration.

Don't shout at your baby and don't punish him for crying for what he wants. Explain in a quiet way why he cannot do whatever it is he wants to do. Your baby will not understand what you say at first, but he will understand your tone of voice and will learn what you mean.

## **CARING FOR YOURSELF**

A new baby who cries very often can be very stressful for parents and caregivers. The crying of a young baby can make us feel tense and helpless. Young babies sense our feelings. When we feel tense they feel tense. This can upset the baby. Try to stay as calm and relaxed as you can. There are a few things all new parents can do to make a calm, relaxed home.

As soon as you bring your baby home start simple routines for yourself and your baby. Keep your routines simple. Do the same things at the same time each day. Babies are calm when they are fed with, played with and have a nap and lunch at the same time each day. A routine helps you relax and helps your baby stay calm. Reading the same story book, rocking and hearing the same song before bedtime each night tells your baby that it is the end of the day. Being able to count on some things day in and day out helps parents and babies stay calm.

Make special time for yourself. Some mothers and fathers like to take a walk, read or take a bath. You are not "spoiling yourself" when you rest. You are giving your baby the gift of a mother and father who are relaxed and ready to meet their baby's needs.

Make sure that you rest when you get the chance. Put on some music that you enjoy. Take care of your health before you worry about your house.

Some crying can be reduced and /or prevented. Try carrying your baby during the day. Babies like to be close to parents. They feel warm and safe. Babies who are held for about three hours a day are happier and cry less.

When your baby can't stop crying, try to find a responsible person who can take turns calming your baby. This will give you someone to talk with as well as give your baby another set of warm and caring arms.

If your baby continues to cry, take a little break. Put the baby safely in a crib, and take a few minutes for yourself in another room.

Call a friend or relative who will listen to your problem and be sympathetic.

Ask a trusted friend or neighbor to watch your child while you take a short break or a brief nap.