

Introduction

When your baby is born, his cry is the most comforting sound you will hear. His cry tells you that he is breathing and is healthy. Every mom longs to hear her baby's first cry.

Over the first few weeks, you may find him becoming fussy even though you can usually console him. You will find that when you hold him or feed him, he will become content. You may begin to notice that he cries differently when he is just bored than when he needs a diaper change.

There may come a time when you find that you just don't know why your baby is crying and you cannot comfort him. This can be the most stressful time for you. There is nothing more frustrating than not being able to comfort your baby. But take heart. You are not a failure. Many babies go through a period of unexplained crying.

Why Does He Cry?

Your baby is born with the ability to communicate with you. While he can't use words, he can let you know his needs by crying. Crying is the only way infants are able to communicate with you. They cry when they're hungry, wet, uncomfortable, or when they can't handle all the things going on around them.

When he is hungry, he may give you cues. He may suck on his hand or turn his head toward you and make sucking sounds (this is also called rooting). If you miss those early cues, then he will resort to crying. Crying may actually be a late sign of hunger.

When he is uncomfortable or hurting, he will cry to let you know. He may have a dirty diaper or a painful diaper rash. It is always best to check your baby for physical problems when a feeding doesn't comfort him.

He may just feel insecure or bored and need you to hold him and love him. No matter what the reason, your response to his cries tell him that you care and that he can rely on you to meet his needs. Research has shown that when you respond to your baby's cries, it actually helps their brain develop. Your efforts to soothe and comfort them begin to teach them to comfort themselves. This is an important first milestone for a baby.

Infants follow a basic pattern of crying. Newborns cry very little. After a few weeks, their crying gradually increases up to about three to four months, when it tapers off. During this time, some babies begin to cry for no obvious reason. However, even this difficult period ends after about the third or fourth month. No two babies are the same. Some cry more than others and some for no apparent reason. Some, once they start crying, seem to have trouble settling back down.

Much research has been done to explain why some babies go through this period of crying. Usually, an infant who is crying is either in distress or needs your attention.

Does Your Baby Have Colic?

When an infant gets colic, it doesn't necessarily mean he has intestinal trouble or a "tummy ache." We say a baby has colic when he fulfills the "rule of three." That is, he cries for more than three hours per day, for more than three days per week, and for longer than three weeks, even though he is healthy and well fed. This rule was designed so that doctors could define when a child has colic. This is important, because so many factors affect crying. One of these factors is the parent's own ability to cope. Everyone deals with crying differently. For some, five minutes is too much, while other parents can manage for hours. Also, a colicky infant, the crying

often starts at the end of the afternoon or in the evening (when you are probably tired).

Your doctor can rule out more serious problems. First, talk with your medical provider to rule out any illness or other problems, such as reflex or allergies to formula. It is always best to have your baby examined if he begins this pattern of crying. Once you know that he is physically healthy and thriving, you can relax. He will outgrow this stage.

If your baby does have colic, keep in mind that it will pass. Colic, like crying in general, should end in three to four months, and life will return to normal.

He Won't Stop Crying! What Can I Do?

Once your doctor has ruled out serious problems that could be causing the crying, there are things that you can do to comfort your baby. Remember, although he may not stop crying, he still needs your touch and care. Often, a colicky baby is simply unable to wind down. Keep a Behavior Diary on your baby. This will show you his behavior over the course of a twenty-four-hour period. It can help you to identify when he is most fussy. This will also help your doctor in diagnosing colic. It is best to keep this diary for a three-to four-day period to see if there is a pattern. By finding his pattern of crying, you can be more sensitive to his needs. If you know that he begins to cry mostly in the early afternoon, plan his quiet time for this period.

- Try gently rocking your crying baby, either in your arms or in a rocking chair, in a dimly-lit, quiet room away from stimulation.
- Sing softly to him
- Try giving your baby a warm bath
- Give a gentle infant massage to settle a gassy tummy
- Try going for a walk with your baby in your arms, in a carriage, or a stroller

Summary

Your baby's continual crying may be from his inability to soothe himself after becoming worked up. A gassy tummy from formula or breast milk can also cause him to cry. Start with the obvious needs he may have. Try to feed him first, as crying is often due to hunger. Check your baby for bug bites, rashes, or other visible problems. Check his diaper or try to figure out if he is too cold or too warm. If you eliminate all possible physical causes, then begin some of the soothing techniques to help calm him.

Enlist the help of family and friends if the crying continues day after day. Take some time away for yourself, get plenty of rest (sleep when he does), and eat well. Don't take his crying personally. He's not crying because of you. Above all, never, ever shake your baby when you become frustrated, because this can cause great harm to someone you love. If you feel that you are losing control, call someone to help you.

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