Newborn Crying

1. What should I do when my newborn cries?

New parents look forward to the day when they will be at home with their newborn. The familiar comfort of home is where this new relationship can blossom. One of the most important things parents learn in these early days is what to do when the baby cries. Newborns cry to express needs such as hunger or discomfort. It is their earliest form of vocal communication. Many newborns want to be held close most of the time. Holding a newborn will not spoil her! Holding baby provides her with the comfort and care she needs to feel safe and secure and to develop a strong attachment.

Newborns also cry when they are unwell. If you have tried the following suggestions without success, your baby is behaving differently than usual, or you are worried that your baby is sick, then call your pediatric primary care provider.

2. Why is my baby crying?

- Your baby may be hungry, especially if the last feeding seemed light or was about 2 hours ago.
- Your baby may be too hot or too cold. Check to see if baby is overdressed or underdressed.
- Your baby’s diaper may be wet. A diaper change may be all that is needed.
- Sometimes babies get bored and need a change of position or location so they have something new to watch or explore.
- Sometimes, your baby needs to be near you, needs movement or rocking, or wants to hear your voice for reassurance.
- Your baby may be ill or in pain. Check for fever (contact health care provider immediately). Check also for other sources of discomfort (such as a piece of hair wrapped tightly around baby’s finger or toe) or if baby is too hot or too cold. Baby could also be constipated.

3. What can I do when I’ve tried these suggestions but my baby won’t stop crying?

Some experts and parents believe that babies cry to release tension. When babies were in the womb, there was constant noise and action so they are adjusting to their new environments and new sensations that they have never experienced before. Responding to all of these sounds, sights, tastes, and touches is a difficult and tiring job for a baby. By the end of the day, your baby may just need to cry. Some infants can be very sensitive to changes in the environment. You may want to experiment with reducing light and sound levels while holding the baby. You can find the conditions that help your baby be most alert and playful or help your baby to be calm, quiet, and ready to sleep. Crying babies can cause great stress in the adults caring for them. Some points to remember:

- Take care of yourself. It is exhausting caring for a baby who is distressed and crying. Don’t be afraid to ask for help.
5 What should I do?
Here is a list of things that parents have found helpful when trying to soothe their babies:

- Try an infant carrier that holds the baby close to your body.
- Go for a walk or a drive in the car.
- “White noise” may be comforting for the baby—turn on the vacuum cleaner, run a fan in the room, or use a “white noise” app.
- Use a baby swing for a short break. Do not leave the baby in the swing for extended periods of time.
- Swaddle the baby.
- Try changes in the baby’s position—over your shoulder or over your knee. Try skin-to-skin contact.
- Play recordings of a heartbeat.

6 I can’t stand it if my baby cries for more than 5 minutes—help!
Many parents feel this way. When older children or grown-ups cry it is usually because they are sad, angry, or in pain. When an infant cries it often feels like there is no reason for the crying, and parents can feel they have failed in some way. Nothing could be further from the truth! Remember:

- Many parents feel guilty or frustrated because they are unable to soothe their baby. These are normal feelings.
- Parents and caregivers are not to blame for baby’s crying.
- Your baby still loves you. He is just going through a period of intense fussiness.
- It’s OK to take a break when you need one. Go ahead and ask for help from family, friends, and neighbors.
- Remember that crying and colic always get better, and babies emerge healthy and happy.

4 What do I do when my baby’s crying seems unpredictable and prolonged?
Crying and fussiness are very common for young babies. Some babies experience intense crying for prolonged periods of time and can be very difficult to soothe. This behavior may be a sign of colic. Your baby may have colic if she cries for more than 3 hours on 3 days of any given week.1 Your baby may be affected by colic whether you breastfeed or bottle-feed. In the first 6 weeks, 17–25% of babies typically have colic, and babies typically cry less by 12 weeks old.2

---

2. Ibid.