

# When Your Baby Cries ... What Can You Do?



**Crying is part of life with a new baby. Although the crying is usually spread out during the day, it can become overwhelming when you feel like you can't console your own baby.**

## Why Babies Cry

Babies don't have other ways to communicate besides crying. Your baby may cry due to hunger, being uncomfortable (need a diaper change), when separated from their mother, tired or because they need to be held close. Your baby does not cry because of being "spoiled" or to try controlling you with their crying. Your quick loving response is a comfort when your baby is upset. Learning how to tune into your baby's cues is a challenging job those first weeks.

## What is Colic and What Can You Do?

A colicky baby is a baby who cries a lot for no apparent reason. Colic is not due to "gas" and does not require stopping breastfeeding or changing infant formulas. If your baby cries a lot, talk to your baby's doctor to make sure nothing is medically wrong, and ask what you might do. Just remember that your baby's colic is temporary and is not your fault.



## Preventing Abusive Head Trauma (Shaken Baby Syndrome)

If a baby is shaken or receives a blunt hit to the head, this can cause Abusive Head Trauma, also known as Shaken Baby Syndrome. This happens when a baby's brain is vigorously shaken. Most often this occurs when a caregiver becomes overwhelmed, frustrated and loses control due to a baby's constant crying. This dangerous form of child abuse causes permanent brain damage or death with as little as a few seconds of shaking.



## Never Shake Your Baby

Babies 6 months of age or less need to sleep on a different sleep surface, but close to the parents' bed. Babies should always sleep alone, on their back and in a crib. If you become angry or very upset, put your baby safely in the crib and walk away. Babies are very sensitive to your stress making them more fussy. Leave the room and take a break from the

sound of the crying. Every few minutes, come back and check on your baby. Never hit, shake or yell at your baby. Babies should never receive physical punishment and should not be exposed to any violence.

### Parenting is Stressful

Some situations are extremely stressful and may require extra support for you and your baby. A few of these stressful situations include:

- Parenting alone or being a teen parent
- Taking care of additional children
- Using drugs or alcohol or having a history of depression or anxiety
- Having relationship struggles or a history of family violence
- Having an especially fussy or colicky baby



### Tips to Calm a Crying Baby

For many babies, a combination of several comfort strategies all at once is what soothes them best. For example, you might swaddle your baby, change their position, (try laying your baby on the right side, across your forearm) gently bounce your baby and

make shushing sounds. Breastfeeding is calming to the baby and mother. A pacifier should not be given to breastfed babies until about 1 month of age when breastfeeding is going well. Bottle fed babies can be given a pacifier anytime for unexplained crying.

### Tips to Calm Yourself – Develop a Crying Plan

If your baby is fussy or colicky, try to find some techniques to calm yourself. These may include listening to music, taking a walk with your baby or having someone you can trust watch your baby to give yourself a break. Just remember that parenting is a hard job and you are not alone!

Pay attention to when you start to feel very frustrated and before you hit your limit. Have a plan ready for how you will reduce your stress and who you will call when you need to take a break.

Many mothers experience sadness, fear, anxiety after having a baby. If you are having difficulty finding the energy to care for yourself or your baby get help.

## My Crying Plan

**I have hit my limit when I**

---

**I will reduce my stress by**

---

**When I need a break I will call**

---

## Resources for New Parents

### A few good parent resources include:

Building Resiliency with Protective Factors and Parenting Strategies, Protecting Your Child's Health from Toxic (harmful) Stress  
<http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/adverse-childhood-experiences>

Center for Effective Parenting  
[www.arkansasparenting.org](http://www.arkansasparenting.org) or (501)364-7580

Parents Helping Parents  
[www.parentshelpingparents.org](http://www.parentshelpingparents.org) or (800)632-8188 - 24 hours a day

Parenting Strategies  
[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

All Babies Cry  
[www.allbabiescry.com](http://www.allbabiescry.com)

Depression During and After Pregnancy  
[https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/Maternal ChildHealthTopics/maternal-womens-health/Depression\\_During\\_and\\_After\\_Pregnancy ENGLISH.pdf](https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/Maternal%20ChildHealthTopics/maternal-womens-health/Depression_During_and_After_Pregnancy_ENGLISH.pdf)

For more information, go to the Arkansas Department of Health website at:  
<http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/child-adolescent-health>