



FUSSY BABY

Caregivers for infants and toddlers are very special people! As a caregiver, you must respond to the individualized needs of each child in your care - not a simple task but a rewarding one! From the moment of birth, an infant feels the impact of personal attention. It is very important that trust and caring develop between you and the child.

COMMUNICATION AND THE FUSSY BABY

Crying, fussy infants can create a nerve-racking situation for the best of us. Understanding the different types of reasons for crying is very important for the caregiver's peace of mind and for the infant or toddler's well-being. **AND ALWAYS REMEMBER, NEVER EVER SHAKE A BABY OR TODDLER!**

Crying is a form of communication. To understand what the problem is, you must listen carefully to the child and try some approaches that may tell you what the child needs or wants.

CAUSES

Some causes of crying are:

- A change in caregivers or care settings.
- Temperature - too hot or too cold.
- Hunger.
- Boredom.
- Tiredness.
- Overstimulation or sudden change.
- Wet or soiled diapers.
- Frustration.
- Discomfort from gas.
- Illness.
- Teething or colic.
- A need to be held.
- Discomfort or pain.

BASIC NEEDS

The following are some basic techniques to try first with an infant or toddler who is continuing to cry:

- Offer some food or drink.
- Make sure the child is dry and clean.

- Check for clothing or pins that may be causing pain or discomfort.
- Determine that the child is not too hot or cold.
- Burp the child to eliminate gas.

PAIN

If the child is still crying, look for signs that the child may be in pain, hurt or ill. Some typical signs are:

- Rubbing or batting at ears.
- Running or blurry eyes.
- Rash.
- White sores in the mouth.
- Stuffy nose.
- Bowel movement changes (constipation or diarrhea).
- Fever.
- Gum tenderness.
- Bruises.
- Not using an arm or leg.

Also, check with others at the house/center to see if they know or saw something that may have resulted in the child's distress.

TENDER LOVING CARE

If you have tried all of the above and the child is still crying, some tender loving care may help.

- Pick the child up to cuddle, walk, talk, or rock soothingly.
- Hold the child to your shoulder and gently rock or pat the child's back.
- Change the child's position.
- Give the child something interesting to do or watch that may divert his/her attention.
- Wrap the child in a warm, snugly, soft blanket.

SOOTHING

If the child continues to cry, or if crying recurs, you may become agitated and upset. You need to be aware that the child can and will pick up on your feelings and will probably become more upset as a result. You need to get your own reaction under control and then try some of the following ideas to pacify the child:

- Dip a pacifier in something sweet. (DO NOT use honey.)
- Touch the child's tongue with a few drops of lemon juice.
- Hold a clean, wet washcloth on the child's forehead or let the child chew on it.
- Experiment with different types of music (classical, singing lullabies, music box, etc.).
- Set a loud timer with a definite tick-tock sound.
- Place child in a carrier (front pack for infants/back pack for toddlers) and carry the child with you as you go about your regular routine, breathing slowly and calmly.
- Turn on a vacuum cleaner, dryer, humidifier, etc. - the monotonous noise can have a calming effect.
- If the child is teething, try to gently massage the child's gums.

If the crying still continues, gently place the child alone in a safe, quiet area (crib or playpen) away from stimulation for 5 to 10 minutes. Stay close so you are available immediately if needed. Often the child is overtired or stimulated and only needs some quiet alone time.

YOUR NEEDS

Do not forget to pay attention to your own needs during this time. The calmer you are, the calmer the child may become. If at all possible, call another adult to take over for awhile and take a break, especially if you are feeling upset.

If you are watching other children, ask an adult to relieve you and try taking the crying child for a ride in the stroller. Sometimes the motion will lull the child to sleep.

EATING DISCOMFORT

If you believe the crying may be related to eating discomfort, try some of the following techniques:

- Hold the child more erect while feeding a bottle (close to a 45 degree angle rather than horizontal).
- Burp the child more frequently.
- Check the nipple on bottles to assure that a steady, smooth stream exists (too big or small of a hole can cause the child to swallow too much air).
- Place your hand on the baby's stomach and use a gentle circular rubbing motion or gently flex the child's legs.
- Calm the child in a warm bath.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR YOU

- Check the basic needs items first.
- Crying is the child's way of communicating. Try to listen and understand the message.
- Stay calm and relax. The child will read your body messages loud and clear.
- When beginning care for a child, **ask the parents what techniques they use to successfully calm the child when fussy.** Those techniques may not work for you, but they might save you a lot of time and worry if they do.
- If the crying continues, call the child's parents.

Remember:

NEVER EVER SHAKE A BABY OR TODDLER!

BUREAU OF COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SYSTEMS CHILD CARE LICENSING DIVISION



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