

# Soothing a Crying Baby

Having a new baby can be a wonderful time, but it can also be challenging. Babies cry, sometimes a lot. Babies usually cry the most between 2 and 4 months of age.



## The crying won't last forever!

Check the easy things first. Be sure your baby has been fed, burped, changed and is dressed for the weather.

### Is your baby not feeling well?

- Check your baby's temperature to rule out a fever.
- If your baby's crying just doesn't sound right, or if you think your baby might be sick, trust your instincts and call your doctor.

### Is your baby's tummy upset?

- Gas, colic or allergies can cause stomach pain.
- Apply pressure by lightly placing your hand on baby's belly or gently move his or her legs in a bicycle motion to relieve pain.
- If you think it has something to do with what your baby eats, check with your doctor.

### Does your baby have a dirty diaper?

Some babies let you know *right away* when they need to be changed.



### Is your baby hungry?

If babies become too hungry they can become extremely fussy, and can be difficult to calm and feed.

#### Learn early hunger signs:

- Opening and closing mouth.
- Sucking or moving hands to mouth.
- Rooting (baby is searching for food and moving head or opening mouth).

### Does your baby need to burp?

Babies swallow air when they breastfeed or suck from a bottle. If the air isn't released, it may cause some pain.

#### How to burp baby:

- Hold baby against your chest with his or her chin resting on your shoulder. Gently rub or pat the back.
- Place baby on your lap, supporting his or her chest with one hand and using your other hand to gently rub or pat the back.

### Is your baby sleepy?

Instead of nodding off, some babies may fuss and cry, especially if they are overly tired. Learn early sleepy signs:

- Rubbing eyes and/or ears
- Yawning
- Closing fists
- Making fast jerky movements

### Does your baby want to be held?

Babies need a lot of cuddling!

- Skin-to-skin care lowers baby's and parent's stress levels.
- Skin-to-skin care is when baby is wearing just a diaper and placed on mom or dad's bare chest.
- Always make sure you are awake and alert when practicing skin-to-skin care.

### Are people smoking around your baby?

- Never let anyone smoke around your baby.
- Babies exposed to smoke can be more colicky.
- Smoke outside or quit.
- Call (800) QUIT-NOW for help.

### What other things can be tried to soothe your baby?

- Sucking can help to calm your baby. Offer your breast, a pacifier or your finger to suck.
- Swaddling:
  - Use a sleep sack with swaddling attachments.
  - Do not swaddle after baby shows signs that he or she is attempting to roll.
  - Always place a swaddled infant to sleep on his or her back in a crib, bassinet or pack and play, and follow all the safe sleep guidelines.
- Play music, sing a lullaby or try white noise.
- Get some fresh air.
- Rock baby in your arms or in a chair – put baby in his or her crib when you feel sleepy.
- Talk softly and sweetly to baby.
- Stroke baby's cheek or gently pat baby's back.
- Give baby a warm bath but check the temperature and provide close supervision.
- Always keep baby close to you by placing the bassinet or pack and play in your room near your bed – that way you can soothe quickly when needed.

### Is your baby too hot or too cold?

- Baby should be dressed in the same amount of clothes as you.
- Remove extra clothing.
- Signs that your baby might be too warm include damp hair, sweaty back or chest, red ears or face.

### Is your baby teething?

- On average, the first tooth breaks through between 4 and 7 months.
- Provide a cool cloth or cold teether for baby to suck.

### Is your baby overstimulated or under-stimulated?

- Crying can be a baby's way of saying, "I've had enough." Remove baby from loud noises or bright lights.
- Crying can also mean "I'm bored." Change your baby's environment.
- Listen to music, dance or go for a walk.

### Are there other things going on with baby?

- Babies can be troubled by something as hard to spot as a hair wrapped tightly around a tiny toe or finger.
- Some babies are extra-sensitive to things like scratchy clothing tags, fabrics or how they are held.

### How to cope with your crying baby:

- Share baby care with your partner.
- Have a friend or relative take over for you once in a while so you can take a walk or a refreshing shower.
- If you become angry or frustrated with your baby, take a deep breath and gently lay baby on the back in his or her crib.
- Check out additional resources on the Period of Purple Crying website at [www.purplecrying.info](http://www.purplecrying.info).

These guidelines apply to healthy, full-term infants.

For specific questions about your baby, ask your pediatrician or health care provider.



Always make sure to practice safe sleep. To learn more about how babies can sleep safely, visit [www.michigan.gov/safesleep](http://www.michigan.gov/safesleep).

Photo Credit: Federal SUID/SIDS Workgroup. Get more information and free materials on safe sleep at [www.safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov).

