

Calming a Fussy Baby (Ways to Soothe Your Infant)

Your baby's cry is how he or she communicates with you. All babies cry, especially in the first 6 months of life. During this period most babies can cry for 45 minutes to 2 hours every day. Babies will usually cry so they can be fed, put to sleep or have their diapers changed.

Colic is an excessive amount of crying that occurs for more than 3 hours every day, most often during the evening. The cause of colic is unknown, but it typically peaks between 6 and 8 weeks of age. Colic will improve on its own, although there are some things parents can do to help stop the crying.

Ways to soothe your infant

NEVER shake your baby to make him or her stop crying! Shaking can damage your baby's brain.

You may have to try a few different techniques before you find one that calms your infant. Here are some ideas for calming a baby:

- Make sure all of the baby's comfort needs are met. Babies like to be dry, dressed warmly but not overheated, and well fed.
- Use a pacifier. Some babies can learn to comfort themselves by sucking. Pacifier use may also help protect against SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- Try stroking the baby's head from the front of the forehead to the back of the neck. Cover as much of the head with your hand as you can. Stroke slowly one stroke for each breath you take in. You can do this while holding him, or after the baby is on his back in a crib with no bumpers, blankets, or toys. Many babies will fall asleep with this gentle massage. Try adding a comforting "shhh" or humming sound.

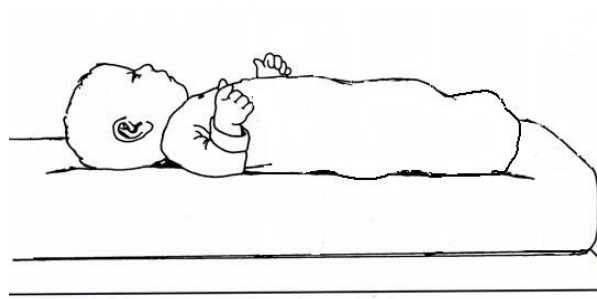


Picture 1 Gently rub the baby's head to help him fall asleep

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Ways to soothe your infant, continued

- Try gently stroking the infant's abdomen.
- Some babies will calm with a slow gentle motion like swinging; others will not. Consider borrowing a swing that is lightly used before buying one. Remember: even if they like it, do not overdo it by putting the baby in the swing all of the time. If the baby falls asleep in the swing, gently move him to a crib with no toys, blankets or bumpers and place him on his back. (Picture 2).



Picture 2 Babies should always sleep on their backs.

- Take the infant for a ride in the car or stroller.
- The baby may need a change in stimulation. Take a walk with a baby in the house.
- Dim the lights where you and the baby are, or go with the baby to another room.
- Give your baby a warm bath.
- Cuddling your baby against your body while you walk or sit in a rocking chair will often soothe fussiness.
- Playing soft music or humming can help to soothe a baby, making him easier to put to sleep.
- Putting a baby in a dark, quiet room with no distractions is best for sleep. Some babies prefer a room with a soothing background noise like a fan, a ticking clock, white noise or soft music.
- If your baby falls asleep somewhere other than his crib, move him to a crib that does not have blankets, toys or bumpers. Very gently place him on his back. Disturb his position as little as possible. Sharp or sudden movements, especially if it puts your baby in an upright position, can awaken him.
- **If you get to the point where you are very frustrated with crying and you feel angry at yourself and your baby, it is time to take a break.**
- If you have a family member or another trusted adult, ask for help. If you are alone make sure the baby is fed, dry and safe. Leave him in the crib while you step away to another room for a few moments.
- Stay calm and your baby is more likely to calm down too.
- Babies less than 6 months cannot be spoiled; their cry is how they communicate.
- Your baby is not mad at you or rejecting you.

Ways to soothe your infant, continued

- The fussiness will improve as your baby grows.
- Keep trying different ways to comfort your baby. You do not need to worry that any of these things will make him spoiled.

When to call the doctor

Most of the time, the crying will stop when the baby's comfort needs are met. Call the doctor if any of these occur:

- your baby cries constantly for more than 3 hours
- the baby's cry sounds different or "painful" to you
- your baby has vomiting, diarrhea or is not feeding well
- your baby cannot be soothed
- you feel scared that you are tired, angry, or you might hurt the baby
- your baby is ill, especially if he or she has a fever of 100.4 F or more