



How to Calm a Fussy Baby: Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Here are ways you can try to comfort a crying baby. It may take a few tries, but with patience and practice you'll find out what works and what doesn't for your baby.

- **Swaddle your baby** in a large, thin blanket (ask your nurse or child's doctor to show you how to do it correctly) to help her feel secure.
- **Hold your baby in your arms and place her body on her left side** to help digestion or stomach for support. Gently rub her back. If your baby goes to sleep, remember to always lay her down in her crib on her **back**.
- **Turn on a calming sound.** Sounds that remind babies of being inside the womb may be calming, such as a white noise device, the humming sound of a fan, or the recording of a heartbeat.
- **Walk your baby in a body carrier or rock her.** Calming motions remind babies of movements they felt in the womb.
- **Avoid overfeeding your baby** because this may also make her uncomfortable. Try to wait at least 2 to 2½ hours from the beginning of one feeding to the next.
- **If it is not yet time to feed your baby, offer the pacifier or help your baby find her thumb or finger.** Many babies are calmed by sucking.
- **If food sensitivity is the cause of discomfort, a change in diet may help.**
 - **For breastfed babies:** Moms may try changing their own diet. See if your baby gets less fussy if you cut down on milk products or caffeine. If there is no difference after making the dietary changes for 1-2 weeks, resume your usual diet. Avoiding spicy or gassy foods like

onions or cabbage has worked for some moms, but this has not been scientifically proven.

- **For bottle-fed babies:** Ask your child's doctor if you should try a **different formula**. This has been shown to be helpful for some babies.
- **Keep a **diary** of when your baby is awake, asleep, eating, and crying.** Write down how long it takes your baby to eat or if your baby cries the most after eating. Talk with your child's doctor about these behaviors to see if her crying is related to sleeping or eating.

Checklist for What Your Baby May Need:

Here are some other reasons why your baby may cry and tips on what you can try to meet that need.

If Your Baby Is...

- **Hungry.** Keep track of feeding times and look for early signs of hunger, such as lip-smacking or moving fists to his mouth.
- **Cold or hot.** Dress your baby in about the same layers of clothing that you are wearing to be comfortable.
- **Wet or soiled.** [Check the diaper.](#) In the first few months, babies wet and soil their diapers a lot.
- **Spitting up or vomiting a lot.** Some babies have symptoms from [gastroesophageal reflux \(GER\)](#), and the fussiness can be confused with [colic](#). Contact your child's doctor if your baby is fussy after feeding, has excessive spitting or vomiting, and is losing or not gaining weight.
- **Sick (has a fever or other illness).** Check your baby's temperature. If your baby is younger than 2 months and has a fever (100.4F or higher rectally), call your child's doctor right away.
- **Overstimulated.** Too many sounds, too many people trying to calm him down, too hot/too cold.
- **Bored.** Quietly sing or hum a song to your baby. Go for a walk.

Why Parents and Caregivers Need Breaks from Crying Babies:

If you have tried to calm your crying baby but nothing seems to work, you may need to take a moment for yourself. Crying can be tough to handle, especially if you're physically tired and mentally exhausted.

- Take a [deep breath](#) and count to 10.
- [Place your baby in a safe place](#), such as crib or playpen without blankets and stuffed animals; leave the room; and let your baby cry alone for about 10 to 15 minutes. You [will not cause harm](#) to your baby by letting them cry in a safe place while you take a break.
- While your baby is in a safe place, consider some actions that may help calm [you](#) down.
- Listen to music for a few minutes.
- Call a friend or family member for emotional support.
- Do simple household chores, such as vacuuming or washing the dishes.
- If you have not calmed after 10 to 15 minutes, check on your baby but do not pick up your baby until you feel [you](#) have calmed down.
- When you have calmed down, go back and pick up your baby. If your baby is still crying, retry soothing measures.
- Call your child's doctor. There may be a medical reason why your baby is crying.
- [Try to be patient. Keeping your baby safe is the most important thing you can do. It is normal to feel upset, frustrated, or even angry, but it is important to keep your behavior under control. Remember, it is never safe to shake, throw, hit, slam, or jerk any child—and it never solves the problem](#)

Colic Relief Tips for Parents:

Does your infant have a regular fussy period each day when it seems you can do nothing to comfort her?

This is quite common, particularly between 6:00 p.m. and midnight—just when you, too, are feeling tired from the day's trials and tribulations. These periods of crankiness may feel like torture, especially if you have other demanding children or work to do, but fortunately they don't last long. The length of this **fussing** usually **peaks** at about three hours a day by six weeks and then **declines** to one or two hours a day by three to four months. As long as the baby **calms** within a few hours and is relatively peaceful the rest of the day, there's no reason for alarm.

If the crying does not stop, but intensifies and persists throughout the day or night, it may be caused by colic. About one-fifth of all babies develop colic, usually between the second and fourth weeks. They cry inconsolably, often screaming, extending or pulling up their legs, and **passing gas**. Their stomachs may be enlarged or distended with gas. The crying spells can occur around the clock, although they often become **worse** in the early evening.

What Causes Colic?

Unfortunately, there is no definite explanation for why this happens. Most often, colic means simply that the child is unusually sensitive to stimulation or cannot "self-console" or regulate his nervous system. (Also known as an immature nervous system.) As she matures, this inability to self-console—marked by constant crying—will improve. Generally, this "colicky crying" will stop by three to four months, but it can last until six months of age. Sometimes, in breastfeeding babies, colic is a sign of **sensitivity to a food in the mother's diet**. The discomfort is caused only rarely by sensitivity to milk protein in formula. Colicky behavior also may signal a medical problem, such as a **fever**, a **hernia** or some type of illness.

Although You Simply May Have to Wait It Out, Several Things Might Be Worth Trying:

- **First, of course, consult your pediatrician** to make sure that the crying is not related to any serious medical condition that may require treatment. Then ask him which of the following would be most helpful.
- **If you're nursing**, you can try to eliminate milk products, caffeine, or any other potentially irritating foods from your own diet.
- **If you're feeding formula to your baby**, talk with your pediatrician about a protein hydrolysate formula. If food sensitivity is causing the discomfort, the colic should decrease within a few days of these changes.
- **Do not overfeed your baby**, which could make her uncomfortable. In general, try to wait at least two to two and a half hours from the start of one feeding to the start of the next one.
- **Walk your baby** in a baby carrier to soothe her. The motion and body contact will reassure her, even if her discomfort persists.
- **Rock her**, run the vacuum in the next room, or place her where she can hear the clothes dryer, a fan or a white-noise machine. Steady rhythmic motion and a calming sound may help her fall asleep. However, be sure to never place your child on top of the washer/dryer.
- **Introduce a pacifier**. While some breastfed babies will actively refuse it, it will provide instant relief for others.
- **Lay your baby tummy-down across your knees and gently rub her back**. The pressure against her belly may help comfort her.
- **Swaddle her** in a large, thin blanket so that she feels secure and warm.
- **Over the counter baby remedies** such as simethicone (gas drops), gripe water and/or probiotics may help alleviate your baby's discomfort. Follow the directions or discuss with your pediatrician on when it would be appropriate to start using these.

When you're feeling tense and anxious, have a family member or a friend look after the baby—and get out of the house. Even an hour or two away will help you maintain a positive attitude. No matter how impatient or angry you become, **a baby should never be shaken.** Shaking an infant hard can cause blindness, brain damage, or even death. Let your own doctor know if you are depressed or are having trouble dealing with your emotions, as she can recommend ways to help.

Source

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