



Calming a Crying Baby

Calming a crying baby can

be difficult. Comforting your baby is sometimes a “trial and error” process. Experiment with the following ideas to see what works best for you and your baby!

Ask Yourself:

- Is he sick or feverish?
- Is he hungry or crying after feeding?
- Does he need to be burped?
- Does he need a dry diaper?
- Is he bored or lonely?
- Is he over-stimulated?
- Is he over or under dressed?
- Are his hands and feet cold?
- Is he in strong sunlight or a cold draft?
- Is he uneasy about his arms and legs being too free to move around?
- Does he need to be “swaddled” by wrapping him snugly in a blanket with his hands up to his face?

Some ideas you might try...

- Hold your baby close to your heart. The sound of your heartbeat is familiar and calming.
- Move him to a new position.
- Dim the lights, turn the TV down or off.
- Rock him gently or try a wind up swing.
- Let him suck his fingers or a pacifier.
- Take a warm bath together.
- Distract him with something interesting.
- Wrap him snugly in a blanket.
- Take him for a walk outside or go for

a drive in the car.

- Turn on a fan. Soft background noise sometimes helps.
- Lay him tummy down across your lap and rub his back or sway your knees from side to side.
- Turn on some quiet music, slow dance together or sing softly to him.
- Some babies enjoy having all of their clothes off.
- If he cries at bath time and is startled by water, wrap him in a diaper or soft blanket before getting him wet. Remove the cover when he feels more comfortable.
- Don't use food as a first solution to a crying crisis, especially if your baby has eaten recently. More food may add to the problem.
- If crying seems worse at 3 weeks, 6 weeks or 3 months, he may be hungry during these growth periods or suffering from colic.

Some of the research on colic suggests the following:

- There is more colic among babies whose mothers or fathers smoke.
- Abdominal gas that most colicky babies experience may be a result of gulping in air as they cry rather than being the cause of the crying.
- Colic may be the result of formula allergies or an allergy to something the breastfeeding mother has eaten, like dairy products, gassy vegetables or caffeine-containing foods.
- Hidden medical conditions may be mistaken for colic. Always consult with

your child's doctor.

- Colic may be a necessary part of your baby's day which allows him to “let off steam” and reorganize the immature central nervous system

Some methods parents have used to help their babies include:

Colic Holds

- **Football Hold:** Place baby, stomach down, on your forearm with his head in the crook of your elbow and his legs straddling your hand. You could also try reversing this hold with baby's head in the palm of your hand with the crotch area in the crook of your arm.
- **Neck Nestle:** Snuggle baby's head in the area between your chin and your chest. Cuddle firmly.
- **Bouncing Baby:** Hold him close while making eye contact, with one hand on his bottom and the other hand supporting his upper back and neck. Bounce him gently by moving your hands up and down about 60—70 bounces per minute.

Baby Bends

- **The Gas Pump:** With baby lying on his back, grasp both lower calves and gently pump his legs, knees to tummy.
- **The Colic Curl:** Hold baby in a sitting position in your arms with his back against your chest. You can also reverse this hold with baby facing you with his legs bent up on your chest. Always be careful to support baby's head.

- Help baby relax in a stomach down position on a firm cushion with his legs dangling over the edge. This puts a light pressure on his tummy. If he falls asleep, remove the cushion and put him on his back to continue sleeping.

When these things don't work...

- If you are upset, it's OK to put your baby in a crib and take a break for up

to 15 minutes. If this doesn't work, contact another adult to help watch the baby and talk through your stress.

- If you are upset or angry and think you might hurt your baby--get help!! Getting help is a sign of strength and the best thing you can do for you and your baby.

Call a neighbor, a friend, your doctor or a church. You can also call your county health department and ask to speak to a Child Guidance professional.

Sources: **HELP at Home**, VORT Corporation; The *Middle of the Night* book by MELD

Child Guidance Where Families Find Solutions



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