



Crying

Listen and you will learn what my different cries are saying to you.



Figuring It Out Together

At the beginning, crying is the main way that your child communicates with you.

Listen. Ask yourself, "What is he trying to tell me?" It won't take long until you begin to recognize patterns and to understand him.

Ask yourself: "What might my baby's crying be telling me?"

It can be helpful to run through, in your mind, a checklist of possibilities to figure out what your baby's crying might be telling you. Here are ideas your checklist may include:



I am hungry. I show you I am hungry when I smack or lick my lips; open and close my mouth; or suck on my lips, tongue, hands, fingers, toes, toys, or clothing. This behavior is known as my rooting reflex.



Please burp me. This gas in my tummy hurts. If you check the American Academy of Pediatrics, they recommend burping me before switching breasts or between every 2 to 3 ounces if we are using a bottle until I am about 6 months old.



I'm tired. Signs that show you I am sleepy include pulling at my ears, yawning, staring into space, fluttering my eyelids, looking serious, sucking on my fingers, and being fussy. As a newborn, I can usually stay awake for 45 to 60 minutes before needing to sleep again. By the time I am 6 months old, this time stretches to about 2 hours. As a toddler, I'll usually be good for 4 to 5 hours of awake time.



Whoa...there is too much going on for me to handle! Try sitting with me facing you or take me to a quiet space for gentle rocking and singing.



Hey...I'm bored. Smile at me. Sit down, and let's talk or sing. Offer me a fun toy to play with.



My diaper needs to be changed. You got this one!



I want to be with you. How about a cuddle? I miss being together and need a little you-time.



I've been lying here a long time. Sometimes, I just need to change position. Pick me up. Let's take a tour around the room. So many exciting things to see!



I don't feel well. If you have questions or worries, check with your child's healthcare provider.



Infantile Colic

No matter how good your checklist, sometimes babies cry for reasons that we don't really understand. Infantile colic is one of these reasons.

Infantile colic is crying. It is intense screaming that can make you feel like screaming too.

No one knows why infantile colic happens. What we do know is that it usually starts around 2 to 3 weeks and is pretty common. In fact, about one in five infants across the world get colic.

Colic typically happens on a schedule, usually beginning at the same time of day. Some common times for it to start are after meals, late in the afternoon, or in the early evening.

Many times, colic is recognized by what is known as the Wessell Criteria: it lasts for at least 3 hours, 3 days a week, and continues for at least 3 weeks. You may notice that your baby pulls his knees up, clenches his fists, and arches his back while crying.

While this may be a tough time for you, remember it is also hard for your baby. Remind yourself that it doesn't last forever. Usually, it goes away at about 3 months.

Sometimes Babies Just Need to Cry

You've checked everything. You've tried everything. Sometimes, some babies just need to cry. No matter how you try to soothe him. No matter if you spend all day with him or if you have periods apart while you work or run errands. This is a phase or *period* of development that begins around 4 weeks of age and often peaks around 3 to 4 months and then begins to lessen.

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome refers to this time as the Period of PURPLE Crying[®]

THE LETTERS IN PURPLE STAND FOR

P

PEAK OF CRYING

Your baby may cry more each week, the most in month 2, then less in months 3-5

U

UNEXPECTED

Crying can come and go and you don't know why.

R

RESISTS SOOTHING

Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try.

P

PAIN-LIKE FACE

A crying baby may look like they are in pain, even when they are not.

L

LONG LASTING

Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more.

E

EVENING

Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

THE WORD PERIOD MEANS THAT THE CRYING HAS A BEGINNING AND AN END

The word period means that the crying has a beginning and an end.

Researchers have found that babies in all cultures have periods of increased crying during the first few months. IT WILL END.



Make a Plan

Have some steps in mind for you to try to help you feel a little calmer when your baby begins to cry:



Listen for a moment.

Have you heard this kind of crying before?



Go to him.



Check your baby.

Run through your "Why is my baby crying?" checklist.



Does one idea seem more likely than the others?



Choose one.

Try it.



Give your baby a few minutes.

If his crying slows or quiets and his body relaxes, you've got it. If not, try another.



Always talk calmly and quietly to baby:

"I hear you. Let's see what we can do to make you feel better."

Sometimes your voice and presence will be enough to help him soothe himself.



Soothing a Crying Baby

Here are some ways to soothe your baby:



Go through your “Why is my baby crying?” checklist.

Offer him a breast or bottle. Check his diaper. Does he need to burp? Rock or cuddle him.



Get moving.

Some colicky babies respond when you walk—and walk and walk - with them. Inside and outside. In your arms. In a carrier. In a buggy on smooth or rough surfaces. Others may like gentle rocking or going for a ride in their car seat.



“Shwoosh” in his ear or sing to him.

Making a white-noise type sound or one of your favorite tunes might calm him—and you.



Use a gentle touch.

A warm bath and gently rubbing his tummy might help.



Do knee bends.

Put him on his back. Gently push both his knees up to his chest. Hold them there for about 10 seconds, then slowly straighten his legs. Do it a few times in a row.



Hold him in different positions.

On your chest or across your lap or like a football or an airplane.



Swaddle him.

Wrap him up like a baby burrito in a cozy blanket. It helps some babies feel safe and secure and can be calming and quieting.

How does he respond? When you rub his back, does he relax or stiffen his arms and legs? When you gently bounce him, do his arms relax and move with you? Just like adults who like a neck rub sometimes and at other times prefer not to be touched, babies have their own preferences. The expression on his face, his sounds, and whether and how he moves and holds his body are other ways besides crying that he tells you what he needs.