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Tips for parents, caregivers to help console a crying baby

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Hearing a wailing newborn can be hard for parents, but it's normal for newborns to cry for one to four hours a day. Some infants may even cry for more than five hours a day. It's part of adjusting to life outside the womb.

It can be frustrating for parents and caregivers when a baby cries a lot, but there are steps you can take to soothe your infant.

First, understand that crying helps babies communicate what they need. For example, they may be cold, hungry or have a wet diaper. Try warming them up, feeding them and changing their diaper. If they are shrieking or sound panicked, check to see if clothing is making them uncomfortable or if a strand of hair is caught around a finger or toe.

Babies also cry when they are sick. If they have a rectal temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher, contact your pediatrician.

Babies, however, may cry even if they are warm, dry, well-fed and don't have a temperature. Here are some things you can try to soothe your baby:

- Rock the baby in a rocking chair or in your arms.
- Gently stroke the baby's head or pat her back or chest.
- Wrap the baby snugly in a receiving blanket.
- Sing or talk to the baby.

- Play soft music or soft rhythmic noise.
- Walk with the baby in your arms, a stroller or a carriage.
- Burp the baby to relieve any trapped gas bubbles.
- Give the baby a warm bath.

If none of these strategies help and the baby doesn’t seem ill, leave the baby alone in a safe location such as a crib. Many babies cry before falling asleep. The crying shouldn’t last long if the child is tired.

If you start to feel you cannot handle the situation, set the baby down in a safe location and get help from a family member or friend. Never shake or hit the baby. Shaking an infant can cause blindness, brain damage or even death.

Talk to your pediatrician about other ways to help a crying baby.

For more information, visit HealthyChildren.org.

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