



Why your baby cries

And what you can do about it

Q. My baby is two months old and she seems to cry a lot. I try my best to settle her but sometimes she just won't stop crying. I get so tired and I spend a lot of time alone with her. Why does she cry so much? My doctor said she is healthy.

A. Crying is how your baby talks to you. It is how she tells you if she is hungry, needs her diaper changed or wants a cuddle. By now you can likely tell the different type of cry she has for each reason. Hearing your baby cry can be very upsetting, and some babies cry more than others. Some babies seem to cry for no reason. Sometimes they can't stop and are not comforted no matter what you do for them.

Q. My baby cries more than she did when she was born. Why is that?

A. All babies cry. Crying increases at about two weeks and peaks at about two months. Crying is normal and it does not mean you are a bad parent. Research has shown that the amount of crying from normal, healthy babies fits into a pattern based on how old they are. Some babies might cry for almost six hours a day during the peak of crying. The crying usually starts to drop off after that and settles down by the fourth or fifth month of life. Even colic is now thought to be just a severe variation of the normal pattern. Often a baby will cry no matter what you do. Sometimes, babies just can't stop crying and will cry for 30 to 40 minutes. It can be very hard for you if your baby cries like that. It can make your healthy baby look like she is in pain even when she might not be.

Q. My baby loves to be held but my mother-in-law said I am spoiling her. Is it possible to spoil my baby by holding her when she cries?

A. You can't spoil a baby by picking her up when she's crying. Crying babies who are regularly picked up and soothed during the first six months of life tend to cry less in the next six months.

Q. Are there some other things I can do for her when she cries?

A. There are lots of ways to soothe your baby. Make sure she is comfortable, not too hot or cold, and has a clean diaper. Snuggle her close to your chest; your heartbeat may soothe her. Carry your baby in a sling or baby carrier. Encourage your baby to suck and give her a gentle back rub. Most babies like gentle motion so gently walk or rock with your baby. Take her for a walk in a stroller or for a car ride. Sound and music may soothe her. Humming or singing a lullaby to her might help. The sound of a vacuum cleaner, clothes dryer or dishwasher can sometimes calm a baby, but make sure there is not too much noise. Is the radio always playing? Is the TV always on? Are people always coming and going? Too much activity can over-stimulate babies and lead to fussing and crying. By watching how your baby reacts, you'll soon learn what she needs.

Q. When should I worry about my baby's crying?

A. Even though most crying is normal, you know your baby best. If you are worried about how much your baby cries, talk to your doctor, public health nurse or call Health Link. Sometimes there are health reasons when a baby cries a lot. If you think your baby is sick, see your doctor or call Health Link.

Q. I feel so frustrated when my baby can't stop crying even when I have done everything I know to comfort her. What should I do when I feel like that?

A. Stay calm. Some babies will cry more often than others, and some babies will cry for long periods. If you are getting frustrated or angry, place your baby in a safe place, such as the crib, leave the room and gently shut the door. Take a 10-minute break to give yourself a chance to calm down before trying to comfort her again. Letting your baby cry for a few minutes

will not harm her. It is more important for you to stay calm than to stop your baby's crying. If you are alone most of the day, make plans to have a trusted friend or relative come right away when the crying is too much and you need a break. Sometimes just talking to someone can be enough to get you through the frustration. You can speak with a Health Link nurse anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Never shake a baby.

Frustration at not being able to comfort a crying infant is the most common reason for shaking a baby. Make sure that everyone who looks after your baby knows to never shake a baby. Knowing about why babies cry won't make your baby stop crying, but it can help you get through the first few months. ●

Isabel Clark is Assistant Manager of Health Link.

FYI

For more information on how to help you and your baby, please visit:

- **Health In Action – When Baby Can't Stop Crying**
(www.cryingbaby.ca)
- **Injury Prevention Calgary Health Region**
(www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/childsafety/)

To speak to a health professional, contact your family doctor, or speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling **Health Link**:

Calgary: 403-943-LINK (5465)
Or toll free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
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