

Soothe a Crying Baby and Prevent Shaken Baby

Soothing a Crying Baby

Babies cry for many reasons. Sometimes babies cry to tell us what they need, such as when they are hungry, wet, tired or even bored. At times, you may not know why your baby is crying. Some babies cry more than others, especially in the first few months of life.

It is normal for babies to:

- Cry on and off
- Keep crying when you are trying to comfort them
- Cry more in the evening hours when tired
- Have a red face, clenched fists, hard and tight stomach, arched back, legs pulled up to their stomach or stiff legs
- Cry for a long time

Responding to your baby's crying quickly can prevent them from becoming too upset. This can make them easier to sooth. It will not spoil them.

Try these things to calm your baby:

- See if your baby is hungry. Be careful not to overfeed your baby, but sometimes they may need to eat more often, such as during a growth spurt.
- Change your baby's diaper if they are wet or dirty.
- Give your baby a warm bath.
- Cuddle or swaddle your baby in a blanket and hold them close to you.
- Place your baby's head near your heart.
- You can use pacifiers with your baby. Never use a string to attach the pacifier around your baby's neck.
- Rock, walk with your baby or take them for a ride in a stroller or a car.
- Talk to your baby in a steady, soft voice.
- Sing, hum or coo softly to your baby.
- Turn on something with a rhythmic sound, such as music, a fan or clothes dryer (do not place your baby on top of a washing machine or dryer).
- Keep the lights low and the room quiet.

Crying Can Be Hard for Parents and Caregivers

You may find ways to calm your baby, but it might not work every time. There may be times your baby cries no matter what you do. Although this is normal, parents sometimes worry there is something wrong.

Toddlers cry for the same reasons babies cry. Toddlers can also cry when they try to learn new things.

It can be hard to soothe your baby when you are upset. If you feel yourself getting frustrated, have someone watch and comfort your baby while you take a break. If you are alone with your baby, put them in a safe place, like their crib, while you calm down.

If you feel frustrated or stressed:

Caring for babies and toddlers is stressful, even when they are not crying. Know when you are becoming stressed out. Have a plan to calm yourself down. After putting your baby on their back in a safe crib or playpen:

- Take several deep breaths and count to 100.
- Go outside for fresh air.
- Wash your face, or take a shower.
- Exercise. Do sit-ups, or climb the stairs a few times.
- Go in another room, and turn on the TV or radio.
- Call a friend or relative.

Check on your baby every 5 to 10 minutes.

Although it is normal for babies to cry, call your baby's doctor if you have any concerns that your baby is sick.

Call your baby's doctor for advice if your baby:

- Cries too much
- Has cries that are loud, piercing or do not stop
- Cries more than 3 hours each day and more often than 3 days each week

Shaken Baby

Shaken baby syndrome (SBS) is a brain injury that happens when a frustrated person violently shakes a baby or toddler.

Shaking often happens when caregivers, like parents, babysitters or other family members, get frustrated or angry when an baby will not stop crying.

Shaking can cause brain damage that can lead to:

- Death
- Blindness
- Deafness
- Epilepsy (seizures)
- Cerebral palsy
- Mental retardation
- Learning problems
- Behavior problems
- poor coordination

No matter how long your baby cries or how frustrated you feel, never shake or hit your baby. Tell anyone who cares for your baby that if they ever become frustrated to put your baby in a safe place, like their crib, and call you. Tell them to never shake your baby.

Before leaving your baby with anyone

Ask yourself these questions:

- Does this person want to watch my baby?
- Can I watch this person with my baby before I leave?
- Is this person good with babies?
- Will my baby be in a safe place with this person?
- Have I told this person to never shake my baby?

Trust your instinct. If it does not feel right, do not leave your baby!

Do not leave your baby with anyone who:

- Seems annoyed when your baby cries.
- Says your baby cries too much.
- May become angry if your baby cries or bothers them.
- Might treat your baby roughly because they are angry with you.
- Has been violent before.
- Lost custody of their own children because they could not care for them.
- Abuses drugs or alcohol.

If you think your baby has been shaken, call 911

Early signs:

- Change in sleeping pattern
- Hard to wake up
- Throwing up (vomiting)
- Bruising on shoulders, arms or legs
- Irritable
- Will not eat or nurse
- Crying that cannot be calmed

Late signs:

- Will not respond or wake up
- Breathing problems
- Seizures or shaking (convulsions)
- No heartbeat

All of these signs are serious. Save precious time by calling 911 right away if you think your baby has been shaken.