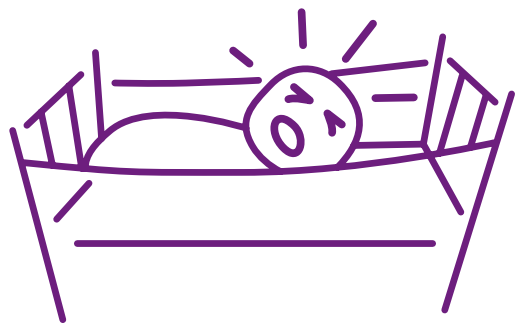


- Some babies only seem to settle when taken for a drive. This is not ideal, but if you are able to do this safely (i.e. you are not too tired, or too distressed by your baby's crying) this might be useful for the few weeks before he grows past this stage.
- Whispering to babies will sometimes get their attention and stop them crying.
- Some babies who cry a lot find it hard to settle into a pattern of feeding and sleeping, so everyone gets very overtired.



Coping with your own feelings

It is very hard to always be patient with your baby, especially if she cries a lot. You may find yourself feeling frustrated, angry, helpless and distressed. These feelings are real and cannot just be ignored. Just because you love your baby doesn't mean you have to like her behaviour all the time.

- Remind yourself that your baby cannot control her crying and is not trying to get at you. She is not 'spoilt' and attending to her will not spoil her.
- If there is someone nearby to help, give him or her the baby while you take a break.
- If you are on your own, you may need to take a break anyway when you feel angry feelings building up. Put your baby down in a safe place and walk away. Go outside perhaps, and take some deep breaths, phone someone or make a cup of tea. When you feel calmer, go back to your baby and try to settle her again.
- It is important to look after yourself when you have a young baby who depends on you. Take up offers of help and get some regular breaks when you can.
- If you are getting down, so down that you are finding it hard to enjoy your baby, or you are often tearful or feeling depressed, it is important to talk it over with your doctor, child health nurse or counsellor.

For more information contact:

- Local Community Child Health Nurse
- Local Family Doctor
- Ngala Family Resource Centre Helpline
8.00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 111 546
www.ngala.com.au
- Parent Help Centre/Parenting Line
Telephone (08) 9272 1466 (24 hr service)
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 654 432

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Warning

This document is published as general information only. You should always consult a healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of any health condition or symptoms.



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crying
baby



A baby's cry is distressing for parents, and it is meant to be. It is the baby's main way of letting people know that something is not right and that he needs help. A new baby cannot care for himself, and has to call for help. The challenge is to work out what the baby needs and what will stop the crying. This is not always easy, and babies may cry quite a lot in the early weeks, even when their parents are very attentive.

Note: If your baby is very upset, or her crying is different to her normal crying, or there are other signs that she might be unwell (such as not feeding well, having trouble breathing, having a fever, vomiting or having runny poo), check with your doctor.

Comforting your baby

- If your baby is crying, he needs you to go to him, and care for him.
- You cannot spoil a baby by responding when he is upset.
- In the early months a baby needs to learn that his world is a safe place to be in, and that he can trust his carers to meet his needs.
- You may not be able to stop the crying every time, but you need to do what you can to provide comfort, and help your baby learn to cope with his distress.
- Research has shown that when parents give comfort to young crying babies, they may cry less when they are older.

Reasons for crying - a checklist

- Is she hungry? Young babies may need feeding fairly often, especially if they are breastfed. Even if she has recently had a feed, you can try a quick top-up to see if that makes things better, or worse.
- Is she having a bowel action? Young babies can make a lot of fuss about doing a poo, even when it is soft or runny.
- Is she uncomfortable? Check if she is too hot or cold, needs a nappy change, has comfortable loose clothing (e.g. not too tight around the tummy).
- Is she in the best place to settle? Some babies sleep better in a quiet dark place, others do better with some noise and activity.
- Does she have wind? Air in the tummy probably does not cause all the trouble it is blamed for, but some babies settle better if you hold them upright and pat their back for a while, even if they do not burp.
- Is she unwell? Check for signs of illness, especially if her crying is different to her usual pattern. Seek help if you are worried.
- Is she overtired? If she has been awake for a while, try wrapping her firmly and rocking or patting her to sleep.
- Does she need a cuddle? Babies need lots of close contact with their parents.

Normal crying patterns

- Parents often feel their baby cries more than other babies, or more than they expected.
- There is a wide range of normal crying. Some babies cry much more than other babies for no clear reason.
- Young babies may have one or two times each day when they usually cry, with some unsettled behaviour in between. The late afternoon and evening tend to be the worst.
- Studies show babies fuss or cry about two hours a day on average, some rather more, and some less.
- The amount of crying often increases until the baby is about six weeks old, and then tends to settle a lot after three months. This is not the same for all babies.

What parents can do

- If your baby is crying a lot, check with your doctor so you can feel sure that your baby is well.
- Then you need to find out what works best for your baby and you. As you get to know your baby you will find it easier to recognise when she wants a feed or a cuddle or needs to be settled to sleep.
- Work through the checklist and try the settling ideas suggested in this brochure, using the ones that seem to fit for you.

Settling ideas

Crying babies tend to arch their heads back and stiffen their legs. Holding them curved into a C or flexed position can help them calm down. Below are some different ways of holding your baby that may help.

- Wrapping or swaddling in a cotton sheet can be calming and help the baby sleep for longer.
- Dummies help some babies to settle, but if you are breastfeeding your baby, don't use one in the early weeks until the breastfeeding is well established.
- Baby slings are great to provide the comfort and contact that babies need when you have something else to do.
- Soft music, rhythmic sounds or continuous machine noises (such as the noise made by a washing machine) soothe some babies.
- Most babies settle when taken for a walk in the pram, and the exercise helps parents feel better too. Don't leave your baby sleeping unattended in a pram though.

