

WHEN BABY CRIES

Your baby is crying. He's not wet, he's just been fed, and you are holding him. Still he cries and you feel like crying with him. It doesn't seem fair that you've done everything you can think of and your baby still cries. Everyone's heart goes out to a mother who is trying to comfort a crying baby.

Your baby is trying to tell you something. The important questions are: Is your baby in physical discomfort? Does he miss the constant contact, the sounds of the heart and the jostling he got in the womb? Is he bored? Is mom overtired?

Physical Discomforts

Baby may need to burp. Lay him across crossed knees while holding his head. With your other hand, gently rub his back in an upward motion. When the bubble is up, your baby may wish to nurse a little more.

Does he need to have a bowel movement? Hold baby upright, let him bend his knees if he wants. Place your hand under his feet to give him something to push against.

Does your baby have a diaper rash? Let him go without any diapers or plastics. Air aids healing. If your baby needs to be covered, wrap a receiving blanket around his bottom but not between his legs. Try using mild soap for his laundry and use extra rinses.

Is he too hot or too cold? Adjust his clothing accordingly. Also, check his clothing for loose pins, rough labels, or loose threads in clothing that could be wrapping around his fingers or toes.

Is he hungry again? Just as your appetite varies, so does your baby's. Breast milk digests quickly, being perfectly suited to baby's system.

Harried Mother Syndrome

The first treatment for a fussy baby is more rest and better nutrition for mother. Are you eating as well as when you were pregnant? Do you nap when baby naps? In the first weeks, mom's major responsibilities are to her baby and herself. Housework can wait, or family and friends can help. Prepare and freeze meals during pregnancy. Make meals simpler and more nourishing. Simplify housework. Put away the doodads that require extra care and dusting. (It probably should be put away for baby-proofing anyway.) Do it before baby comes.

Use a diaper service for a few weeks. (This is a great gift, if people ask what you need.)

Let father or friends care for your baby for a little while so that you can nap, bathe, whatever you like to do to be refreshed.

Physical Contact

You don't spoil babies by picking them up and holding them. Physical contact is necessary to baby's mental and physical development. Babies who don't get enough contact can develop marasmus, a physical wasting away despite adequate food. This was first observed in institutionalized babies.

Babies enjoy the same conditions they experienced before birth, particularly in the first few weeks. They like to hear their mother's heartbeat and voice. Hold your baby close and sing lullaby's. A variety of records and tapes are available to supply sounds. Wrap your baby snugly. If he is lying on his side put a rolled blanket behind his back to control flopping, as this many times upsets baby. Rock baby to sleep. Rocking chairs soothe mother too. Parents can take their baby to bed at night or naptime for nursing and physical contact.

Bored Baby

Babies can't move themselves to something more interesting. Their only way to help themselves is to fuss for attention. Move your baby around the house while you do your housework. Put your baby on a blanket on the floor, in a front style baby carrier, or in a seat on the table while you sit next to him and prepare supper. (DON'T leave baby unattended on the table!) Talk to him as you work, and make eye contact frequently.

Take your baby for a walk; it is good for both of you. Exercise for mom when baby's awake can be more refreshing than a short nap. Take a bath with your baby. You'll both be refreshed, and it's lots of fun.

Sometimes babies like to look at the floor. Try placing him across your knees and rock by alternately lifting your heels.

Comments on Colic

Colic has become a catch-all term for a fussy baby who isn't easily calmed. Try feeding your baby more frequently for shorter periods of time. This also gives your baby extra needed cuddling.

Some things in the mother's diet may cause colicky type restlessness. Possible causes may be excessive amounts of vitamins or food supplements, diet drinks and foods prepared with diet sweeteners, cow's milk (a prime offender), citrus fruits or juices, or chocolate. Most foods eaten in moderation cause no discomfort.

Taking care of a fussy baby is time consuming. There are no short cuts because most often what baby wants is more of mother. If the time required seems excessive, remember that babies grow rapidly and soon you will be hankering for your little one again.