

## Overexcited

Some babies will cry if they have had too much activity. Your baby will give you clues when he has had enough play. He will look away or may start to cry. Babies may also fuss if they have been held or handled too much. Calmly rock him while gently patting his back. He may need to be in a quiet, calm, soothing place. Lay your baby on his back in his crib and talk to him in a comforting way. Darkening the room may help as well.

## Illness

Babies cry when they are sick. Any unusual behaviour may indicate that your baby is sick. You know your baby best. Consult your doctor if your baby's crying is accompanied by a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, refusal to drink, a rash, sleepiness, irritability, or if your baby looks sick. Your baby should be seen by a health care professional if his cries are louder or more constant than usual.



**Remember to handle  
your baby with care.  
Never Shake A Baby!**

## What to do when the crying does not stop?

Sometimes your baby will continue to cry even after you try to comfort him. It is important to know your baby is not angry with you. It does not mean you are a bad parent or that it is your fault. At times it is difficult to find the reason for the crying. This can make you feel frustrated and upset. It is important that, when you have these feelings, you remove yourself from your baby so that you do not hurt him.

***Try to stay calm. Place your baby  
in a safe place, such as their crib,  
and take a break***

Research shows that some babies experience intense crying that peaks around two months of age. These babies are difficult to comfort. Their crying often occurs during the evening hours and lasts a long time (30 minutes or more). It helps to comfort, carry, walk with and talk to your baby. Some babies may respond to swaddling and shushing. If the crying becomes too intense and you begin to feel upset, put your baby down in a safe place, such as a crib, and take a break. Wait 15 minutes until you have calmed down.

**For additional information, or to get  
a copy of "Your Baby Won't Stop Crying?"  
Call Ottawa Public Health Information at  
613-580-6744 / TTY 613- 580-9656**

## More readings:

Christine Langlois (1998). Growing with Your Child: Pre-birth to age 5. Ballantine Books, Random House of Canada  
Leach, Penelope (1998). Your Baby and Child: from Birth to Age 5. Alfred A. Knopf Inc. New York  
Canadian Medical Association (2001). Complete book of mother and baby care: A parent's practical handbook from conception to three years. Neografia, Slovakia  
DVD: The Happiest Baby on the Block, Harvey Karp, M.D., 2002, from Starlight Home Entertainment [www.thehappiestbaby.com](http://www.thehappiestbaby.com)

Ottawa

# Getting to know your crying baby



Babies cry for many reasons, and often their cry changes depending on their need. This guide will help you to know why babies cry and how to comfort your crying baby.

**Getting to know your baby and how to comfort your baby takes time and practice. Look, feel, and listen to your baby. Be patient with yourself and with your baby. Trust that, in time, you will get to know your baby.**

### **Hunger**

Hunger is the most common reason for a baby to cry. You will soon recognize this cry as regular, unrelenting and demanding. Your baby may suck his fingers or turn to your breast. Respond to your baby by offering the breast or the bottle to meet this need. Often, the hunger cry is the easiest to soothe.

### **Thirst**

Babies require more fluids in hot weather and cry if they are thirsty. Breastfed babies should be offered the breast to relieve thirst and do not need any additional water. Bottled babies can be given one ounce of sterilized water, twice a day, in addition to their bottle.

### **The need to suck**

Babies naturally have a strong desire to suck. Sucking helps to comfort and settle them. Do not hesitate to offer your breast to your baby, as a source of comfort and nourishment. A bottlefed baby may be offered a pacifier. It is important to check your baby's pacifier regularly. Health Canada recommends that pacifiers should be changed every two months regardless of signs of wear, and thrown out when the nipple changes colour, cracks, breaks or becomes sticky. Wash the pacifier regularly and do not dip it in anything sweet. It is unsafe to attach a string or cord to the pacifier and place it around your baby's neck.



### **The need to be held**

Babies need to be held and cuddled. Often just picking your baby up and holding him will stop his crying. Being held against your warm body provides your baby with a sense of security and love. Once you have settled your baby, lay him on his back to play or just to look around. These actions help your baby to soothe himself.

### **Feeling too warm or too cool**

Babies may fuss if they are either too warm or too cool. Most often, if the temperature in the room is comfortable for you, it will be comfortable for your baby. Place your hand on the back of your baby's neck to check if he is too warm. Your baby should not be sweating. Remove your baby's hat and outdoor clothing when your baby is indoors or in a warm car. For sleep, dress your baby in a sleeper and cover him with a thin, light blanket. Make sure your baby's head remains uncovered. Any pillows or pillow-like items should be removed from your baby's crib, including bumper pads.

### **Discomfort**

Babies will cry if they are uncomfortable or in pain. You will recognize this cry as loud, piercing and urgent. An uncomfortable baby may need to have his diaper changed, his clothing adjusted or his position changed. Gas pains are the most common cause for a baby to cry in discomfort. He may tighten his stomach muscles, straighten or stiffen his legs, or pull his legs up and cry. Burping your baby, walking while holding your baby close and gently patting his back may help. You can also try a massage, a car ride, or a baby swing.

### **Startles**

It is common for babies to be startled by their own movements. They may jerk and twitch and wake themselves. Try gently wrapping your baby in a thin blanket to prevent his jerky movements from disturbing him. Do not over bundle your baby. Some babies do not like to be wrapped and may fuss. Your baby will let you know.

### **Boredom**

Babies cry in a low, regular whine when they are bored. Sometimes your baby may need to be picked up and held. Other times he may just need to hear your voice, talking or singing to him. Your baby needs to know you are there. He is also learning about the world around him. He may like to listen to music, lullabies or nursery rhymes. He may like to look at a mobile, a mirror, black and white objects, or colourful pictures.