



Infantile Colic

No matter how good your checklist, sometimes babies cry for reasons that we don't really understand. Infantile colic is one of these reasons.

Infantile colic is crying. It is intense screaming that can make you feel like screaming too.

No one knows why infantile colic happens. What we do know is that it usually starts around 2 to 3 weeks and is pretty common. In fact, about one in five infants across the world get colic.

Colic typically happens on a schedule, usually beginning at the same time of day. Some common times for it to start are after meals, late in the afternoon, or in the early evening.

Many times, colic is recognized by what is known as the Wessell Criteria: it lasts for at least 3 hours, 3 days a week, and continues for at least 3 weeks. You may notice that your baby pulls his knees up, clenches his fists, and arches his back while crying.

While this may be a tough time for you, remember it is also hard for your baby. Remind yourself that it doesn't last forever. Usually, it goes away at about 3 months.

Sometimes Babies Just Need to Cry

You've checked everything. You've tried everything. Sometimes, some babies just need to cry. No matter how you try to soothe him. No matter if you spend all day with him or if you have periods apart while you work or run errands. This is a phase or *period* of development that begins around 4 weeks of age and often peaks around 3 to 4 months and then begins to lessen.

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome refers to this time as the Period of PURPLE Crying[®]

THE LETTERS IN PURPLE STAND FOR

P

PEAK OF CRYING

Your baby may cry more each week, the most in month 2, then less in months 3-5

U

UNEXPECTED

Crying can come and go and you don't know why.

R

RESISTS SOOTHING

Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try.

P

PAIN-LIKE FACE

A crying baby may look like they are in pain, even when they are not.

L

LONG LASTING

Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more.

E

EVENING

Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

THE WORD PERIOD MEANS THAT THE CRYING HAS A BEGINNING AND AN END

The word period means that the crying has a beginning and an end.

Researchers have found that babies in all cultures have periods of increased crying during the first few months. IT WILL END.



Make a Plan

Have some steps in mind for you to try to help you feel a little calmer when your baby begins to cry:



Listen for a moment.

Have you heard this kind of crying before?



Go to him.



Check your baby.

Run through your "Why is my baby crying?" checklist.



Does one idea seem more likely than the others?



Choose one.

Try it.



Give your baby a few minutes.

If his crying slows or quiets and his body relaxes, you've got it. If not, try another.



Always talk calmly and quietly to baby:

"I hear you. Let's see what we can do to make you feel better."

Sometimes your voice and presence will be enough to help him soothe himself.



Soothing a Crying Baby

Here are some ways to soothe your baby:



Go through your “Why is my baby crying?” checklist.

Offer him a breast or bottle. Check his diaper. Does he need to burp?
Rock or cuddle him.



Get moving.

Some colicky babies respond when you walk—and walk and walk - with them. Inside and outside. In your arms. In a carrier. In a buggy on smooth or rough surfaces. Others may like gentle rocking or going for a ride in their car seat.



“Shwoosh” in his ear or sing to him.

Making a white-noise type sound or one of your favorite tunes might calm him—and you.



Use a gentle touch.

A warm bath and gently rubbing his tummy might help.



Do knee bends.

Put him on his back. Gently push both his knees up to his chest. Hold them there for about 10 seconds, then slowly straighten his legs. Do it a few times in a row.



Hold him in different positions.

On your chest or across your lap or like a football or an airplane.



Swaddle him.

Wrap him up like a baby burrito in a cozy blanket. It helps some babies feel safe and secure and can be calming and quieting.

How does he respond? When you rub his back, does he relax or stiffen his arms and legs? When you gently bounce him, do his arms relax and move with you? Just like adults who like a neck rub sometimes and at other times prefer not to be touched, babies have their own preferences. The expression on his face, his sounds, and whether and how he moves and holds his body are other ways besides crying that he tells you what he needs.



You Cannot Spoil Your Baby

The research is in. Picking up a baby who is crying is a good thing! It helps shape a baby's brain for his whole life. When a baby cries, he is asking for help, and it is important to respond. When babies get lots of holding, cuddling, touching, and rocking, it helps their brains learn to remain calm. Babies who are left to cry a lot are more likely to grow into adults who react more strongly to stress and who have a harder time calming themselves.

A baby cannot be spoiled! Pick him up when he is crying, cuddle him, and show him how much he is loved.



SAFETY ALERT Never shake your baby!

When it feels like the crying may never stop, it is easy to get upset and frustrated. No matter how frustrated you may feel, never shake your baby!

When a baby is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. It can even lead to his death. His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GOING TO LOSE IT:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Take some deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.