When the Crying Won’t Stop

Babies cry when they are hungry, wet, tired, or just want company. Most of the time, holding, feeding, changing, or playing with your baby is comforting and will stop her crying. However, there are times when your baby may cry despite your many attempts to calm her.

She may be sick, have colic, or be overstimulated. Your baby’s doctor will be able to determine whether or not there is a medical reason for her crying. If she has a fever of more than 100.4 degrees and is younger than 3 months, call your doctor right away.

**When your baby cries, don’t shake her!** Try to stay calm – when you are upset, your baby becomes even more upset.

**If you feel overwhelmed**

Many parents of young children suffer from lack of sleep and become frustrated at their baby’s prolonged crying. If you feel frustrated, angry, or unable to deal with your baby, these actions may help with the stress:

- Putting your baby safely in her crib and leaving the room for a few minutes.
- Asking someone else to soothe her.
- Taking deep breaths.
- Letting out physical tension in a non-destructive way, like exercising, crying, or scribbling on a piece of paper.
- Putting on relaxing music.
- Before you reach the point of losing control, try calling:
  - Your doctor
  - Your parent educator
  - A friend
  - A family member
  - The National Child Abuse Hotline at (800)-4-A-CHILD

**Ways to calm your newborn**

- Give your baby a warm bath, put a warm-water bottle next to her, or put a blanket in the dryer for a few minutes to warm it, then wrap her in it. This reminds her of the womb.
- Try a different holding position (the “football hold” or holding her against your chest).
- Walk, rock, or sway. This also reminds her of the womb.
- Take her for a ride in the car or stroller, or place her in a baby swing.
- Sing or make soothing sounds.

- Swaddle her by wrapping her in a blanket so she can’t flail her arms and legs.
- Give her something to suck on, like a pacifier or blanket, or try to get her interested in sucking her thumb or fingers.
- Offer a gentle massage.

**Ways to calm an older baby**

- Feed her more slowly and burp her frequently.
- Put her on the floor in a position where she can move around freely.
- Move to another room where there is less stimulation from noise, lights, or activity.
- Offer a gentle massage.

**What happens when a child is shaken**

Shaken baby syndrome occurs when a caregiver shakes a young child or infant. It is a form of child abuse. It often happens in an attempt to quiet crying.
A young child has a heavy head, immature neck muscles, a thin skull, and a soft, growing brain. When he is shaken, his brain bumps repeatedly against the skull walls. This bruises the brain and causes it to bleed. Tiny blood vessels in the eye can tear. Shaking a baby can cause partial or total blindness, brain damage, and even death.

**Shaken baby syndrome occurs most often:**

- When a baby has been crying inconsolably.
- When parents are sleep-deprived.
- When a baby has been slapped or hit in the head.
- When parents feel frustration and anger toward their baby.
- When a baby has been tossed repeatedly into the air, even in play.
- In babies 3 to 6 months old (due to colic and prolonged crying).
- In toddlers 18 to 24 months old (because of "terrible twos" behavior).

**Share the message**

As the designer of a safe environment for your baby, make sure that any caregiver in contact with your child understands shaken baby syndrome. All of your baby’s relatives and babysitters need to know what shaken baby syndrome is, how it happens, its possible consequences, and how to prevent it.