

Baby, Stop Crying!

What do you do when your baby won't stop crying? Really, you don't have to be a rocket scientist. The first thing to deal with is your own attitude. Sure it's inconvenient to be interrupted from important activities by a baby that refuses to be reasonable. On the other hand, you brought this poor little powerless thing into the world, and he depends completely on you for everything (that's part of fun, after all). And this is his only way of communicating that he needs something. So now we just have to figure what that is! You don't have to be a mind reader, if you follow some simple steps: look at the context, the possible causes, and the sound of the cry itself. Why might a baby cry? -Hungry. Babies have small stomachs, and each one has her own feeding habits and metabolism rates, so you really can't know how often she needs to eat except from experience. Some babies just like to suck for comfort, even if they're not so hungry. So you really have to play it by ear; if your baby wants to eat constantly, maybe try a pacifier. -Tired. Again, this is individual, but babies have to sleep a lot. Don't just keep him up because you want to play with him or show him off to the relatives. If he gets over-stimulated, it will be ten times harder to put him to sleep. Most babies yawn and rub their eyes when they start getting tired, so only stretch them out at your own risk. -Uncomfortable. Some babies are more sensitive to the environment than others: they can react to the temperature of the room, the material of their clothing, its looseness or tightness, wetness or dryness, or any number of other factors. Just because your other child didn't react this way, doesn't mean this one will have the same sensitivities. Be patient - this usually takes trial and error. -Sickness. Watch for unusual symptoms or behavior. Temperature, skin rashes, diarrhea, constipation, cramps, vomiting, loss of appetite, pale complexion, muscle weakness are all common symptoms. If the baby consistently cries in a particular position, like whenever he's on his stomach or whenever he's on his back - watch out for infection or bone problems. Of course, if the problem persists, consult your pediatrician. -Teething. Typically between four and seven months, this is a common cause for hysterical babies and hysterical mothers. With some it starts earlier and some later, and at the beginning there are virtually no visible signs. There's also not a whole lot you can do about it, but teething gels and homeopathic remedies are available. Don't worry, you'll both live through it. -Colic. The definition of this basket diagnosis is "a condition of unknown cause seen in infants less than three months old, marked by periods of inconsolable crying lasting for hours at a time for at least three weeks." If it's not caused by abdominal pain, then you'll just have to wait it out. As difficult as this can be, they do outgrow it, if that's any consolation. Once you've identified a particular problem, listen carefully to the kind of cry that accompanies it. Simply listening to the cry itself can often pinpoint the problem without further diagnosis. If you get good at this, it will really speed up the response time. So what do you do about it? Unless you're intentionally trying to get her into a specific feeding or sleeping routine, there's no point getting into a power struggle. If you do have a plan, you'll just have to live with the crying for awhile, until she adjusts to the change. Meanwhile, try to be supportive and sympathetic - remember, it's not easy being a baby. Be creative and put some heart into it. Try massaging her feet, belly, and back. Try singing, rocking standing up, holding over the shoulder, bassinet swings, sound generators, music. Eventually you'll discover what your baby likes best. Soon he'll grow up enough to verbalize what he wants. For the time being, don't let a few crying spells ruin a beautiful babyhood.

About the Author

Get more of Maryellen Gold's expert tips and advice on baby parenting issues in her blog at www.maryellensbaby.com. With years of experience as a mother, grandmother, teacher, and adopted parent of two Down's syndrome children, she has plenty to share about the world of babies. She also acts as senior consultant for www.babythings4u.com

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