



## Help for young babies with crying and sleep problems (0-3 months)

The average baby cries for as much as 2 hours a day\* and this is often related to hunger, a dirty nappy or tiredness. When a baby cries, it can be hard to cope with, but understanding some of the reasons why and sharing another parent's advice can be helpful. The following checklist may help to soothe your baby.

\*(Journal of Pediatrics June 2017)

### Is baby hungry?

- Offer breast or bottle feed.

### Is baby in pain?

- Check for a temperature, baby's normal temperature is about 36.4C or 97.5F.
- Offer breast, bottle or dummy.
- Speak to a pharmacist or GP about infant colic remedies.
- Try gently massaging baby's tummy in a clockwise direction.
- Try changing baby's position.
- Pick baby up, walk around with them – a baby sling can be helpful.
- Try gently rocking baby up and down.

### Is baby tired but fighting sleep?

- Offer breast, bottle or dummy.
- Try rocking baby horizontally in your arms or in a buggy.
- Try a swinging crib.
- Try a quieter room.
- Fussing with a baby can keep them awake, so putting your baby down to cry somewhere safe for a short period can help baby to sleep.
- Try a softer light or a darker room.
- Quiet background noise can soothe babies such as a ticking clock, or quiet music.
- Check that baby is comfortable and their clothes are not too tight.

- Check baby isn't too hot or cold by feeling tummy to check temperature.
- Motion can help babies sleep such as a car ride or buggy ride in the fresh air.
- A warm bath covering baby's tummy can be soothing.
- Feeding problems.
- Consult Health Visitor, GP, National Childbirth Trust (NCT) counsellor or NHS Direct if you are still experiencing problems.

### Is baby uncomfortable?

- Check baby's temperature by feeling tummy and adjust clothing accordingly.
- Change baby's nappy.
- Try different nappies.
- Let baby kick, nappy-free
- Check for nappy rash – consult Health Visitor.
- Check for clothing rashes.

### Sensitive baby?

- Handle and talk to baby gently and quietly.
- Do not overwhelm baby with stimulation.
- Try a quieter environment.
- Try to keep to a routine and limit the number of visitors.

### Is baby generally cranky?

- Check for temperature, normal baby temperature is about 36.4C or 97.5F.
- Talk to your baby.
- Play with him/her: use toys or safe household objects.
- Let baby kick, nappy-free.
- Try using a baby sling to carry baby around.
- Try a bouncing chair or baby bouncer (always follow manufacturers guidelines).
- Take baby out in a buggy.
- Visit a friend.
- Comfort by gentle rocking movement or soothing noises.
- Offer baby a feed.
- Massage baby and give a warm bath.

### Does baby have colic?

Colic should be diagnosed by a GP or Health Visitor, as there may be another cause.

- Symptoms of colic include: crying in the late afternoon or evening that lasts several hours, baby's face being red and flushed when they cry and baby clenching their fists, drawing their knees up to their tummy, or arching their back while crying.
- If baby has colic, try the following suggestions:

- Try to prevent baby from swallowing air by sitting or holding them upright during feeding.
- Try to burp baby after feed.
- Try gently rocking baby over your shoulder.
- Try massaging baby's tummy.
- A warm bath covering baby's tummy can be soothing.
- Consult your GP, Health Visitor or NHS Direct or a pharmacist for more information about remedies for colic.

### Still crying?

- Put baby down in a safe place, walk out of the room and shut the door, take a short break. If you are very stressed it is safer for a baby to be in their cot while you make a cup of tea and have a break. They are not harmed by being left to cry for a short while.
- Give baby to a trusted friend or family member for a few hours if possible.
- Use any time away from baby to look after yourself, make sure you eat well and unwind.
- Go out with baby.
- Phone your GP, Health Visitor, NHS Direct, The Cry-sis Helpline, friend or relative.

### Night-time Crying

- Make sure baby is not hungry or thirsty.
- Check that baby is comfortable, that their nappy is dry and clothes are not too tight.
- Is baby too hot or too cold? Check baby's tummy temperature.
- Rhythmic movement often settles babies. Gentle rocking in a pram or crib can have a hypnotic effect. Baby Slings are useful as they provide continual movement and the security of Mum/Dad.
- Some babies prefer the dark, others like a low night light.
- Soothing soft music may help baby fall asleep. It's worth trying to get into a bedtime routine. This is best introduced as soon as possible with perhaps a warm bath before bedtime and a quiet feed and cuddle before sleep. Avoid the use of TVs, phones or ipads, these emit blue light that can affect sleep patterns.
- From 3 months babies are becoming more aware of their environment, so other methods of settling them to sleep can be considered. Mobiles above the cot prevent boredom and make baby's cot a more enjoyable place to be. Make sure these are attached securely and safely out of reach.
- Many babies find their own fingers or thumbs to suck for comfort.

### Sleep information

Newborn babies need a lot of sleep, but their sleep patterns change, and every baby is different. On average a baby will sleep for 16-18 hours a day in the first four months, and from 12-16 hours in the first year, but of course they will get hungry and wake every few

hours for a feed or a nappy change. Going without sleep is one of the biggest challenges for a parent, and establishing a sleep routine isn't always easy.

### What is sleep?

Sleep is divided into two different states which alternate through the night. Dream Sleep sometimes referred as REM (rapid eye movement) and Deep Sleep. As we pass from one state to the other, we often wake, roll over and go back to sleep, totally unaware that we have woken at all. This is because we have sleep clues – a dark room, comfy bed etc. A baby needs to learn his sleep clues. If these sleep clues are being fed, rocked to sleep, or having a dummy, he will need those clues when he wakes at night. You can teach him new clues which will enable him to fall asleep on his own, by repeating the same routine each time he wakes.

### How much should a baby sleep?

There are no hard and fast rules. It is unusual for a young baby to sleep through the night straight away. Young babies need regular feeds and attention. Parents are often made to feel that their baby should sleep through the night as early as possible, try not to be pressured this way.

If you are concerned about how little your baby is sleeping, particularly if he is crying a great deal, consult your doctor to eliminate a possible medical problem.

The following section written by Prof Ian St.James Roberts, a patron of Cry-sis, gives detailed information and advice on crying problems, together with references for further reading. Visit: [www.cry-sis.org.uk/help-with-young-babies-guide](http://www.cry-sis.org.uk/help-with-young-babies-guide)

You can contact the  
**CRY-SIS HELPLINE**  
**08451 228 669**  
Lines Open 7 Days a Week 9am – 10pm

2p per minute plus the standard network charge

On dialling the Cry-sis Helpline you will be connected to a volunteer who once experienced problems like yours. The helpline is open seven days a week between 9am and 10pm, but please remember that the volunteer is a parent, just like you, with family commitments.