

Crying baby under 3 months of age

Advice for parents and carers



A baby's cry can be upsetting and frustrating. It is designed to get your attention and you may be worried that something is wrong with your baby.

Your baby may start to cry more frequently at about 2 weeks of age. The crying may get more frequent and last longer during the next few weeks, hitting a peak at about 6 to 8 weeks.

Every baby is different, but after about 8 weeks, babies start to cry less and less each week.

Babies cry for many reasons – most commonly because they are hungry or need a nappy change. Sometimes babies cry because they are uncomfortable or are unwell. This may be due to colic, reflux, constipation or infection amongst other things

Below are some things to look out for if your baby is crying that may suggest they are unwell.

When should you worry?



RED

If your child has any of the following:

- Becomes pale, mottled or abnormally cold to touch
- Becomes stiff for a prolonged period or has rhythmic, jerky movements of arms or legs that does not stop when you touch it (a fit/seizure)
- Becomes extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction)
- Becomes floppy or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Is going blue around the lips or has difficulty breathing
- A rash that does not disappear with pressure (see the "[Glass Test](#)")
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C / 100.4°F or above (unless fever in the 48 hours following vaccinations and no other red or amber features)

You need urgent help.

Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999



AMBER

If your child has any of the following:

- Becomes increasingly sleepy and not consistently waking for feeds
- No wet nappies in the last 8 hours
- Has a dry mouth or sunken fontanelle (soft spot on head)
- Is getting worse or you are worried
- Is 3-6 months of age with a temperature of 39°C / 102.2°F or above (but fever is common in babies up to 2 days after they receive vaccinations)

You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.

Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111



GREEN

- None of the above are present
- Continues to feed well
- Has plenty of wet nappies
- Additional advice is also available for families to help cope with crying in otherwise well babies – [click here](#).

Self Care

Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, contact your Health Visitor or call NHS 111 – dial 111

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Colic

Colic can cause excessive, frequent crying in a baby who appears to be otherwise healthy. It's a common problem that affects up to one in five babies. Although the cause is unknown, it is likely to be due to intestinal discomfort like bowel cramping.

Colic tends to begin when a baby is a few weeks old. It normally stops by four months of age, or by six months at the latest.

Looking after a colicky baby can be very frustrating and distressing, but the problem will eventually pass and is usually nothing to worry about.

Signs and symptoms of colic include:

- Your baby often starts crying suddenly. The cry is high-pitched and nothing you do seems to help.
- The crying begins at the same time each day, often in the afternoon or evening.
- Your baby might draw their legs up when they cry.
- Your baby might clench their hands.
- Your baby's face might flush.
- The crying can last for minutes or hours. A baby with colic cries for 3 hours a day or more.
- The crying often winds down when your baby is exhausted or when they have passed wind or poo.

What can you do to help your baby

Comfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop.

Babies can cry for reasons such as if they are hungry, tired, wet/dirty or they are unwell.

Check these basic needs and try some simple calming techniques:

- Talk calmly, hum or sing to your baby
- Let them hear a repeating or soothing sound
- Hold them close - skin to skin
- Go for a walk outside with your baby
- Give them a warm bath

These techniques may not always work. It may take a combination or more than one attempt to soothe your baby.

If the crying won't stop, what should you do

Not every baby is easy to calm but that doesn't mean that you are doing anything wrong.

Don't get angry with your baby or yourself. Instead, put your baby in a safe place and walk away so that you can calm yourself down by doing something that takes your mind off the crying. Try:

- Listening to music, doing some exercises or doing something that calms you
- Call a relative or friend - they may be able to calm your baby or may be able to watch them

After a few minutes when you are calm, go back and check on the baby.

It's normal for parents to get stressed, especially by their baby crying. Put some time aside for yourself and take care of your needs as well as your baby's to help you cope.

Handling a baby roughly will make them more upset. Shouting or getting angry with your baby will make things worse.

For help and support, take a look at the cry-sis website: <https://www.cry-sis.org.uk/>