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CRYING AND YOUR BABY



Congratulations on the birth of your baby. This is such an exciting time, but the first few weeks can feel overwhelming, especially when your baby cries.

Babies cry for many reasons and some of these may include:

- Having a wet or dirty nappy
- Needing a feed
- Needing winded
- Being hot or cold
- Being bored
- Being overstimulated or
- Being tired

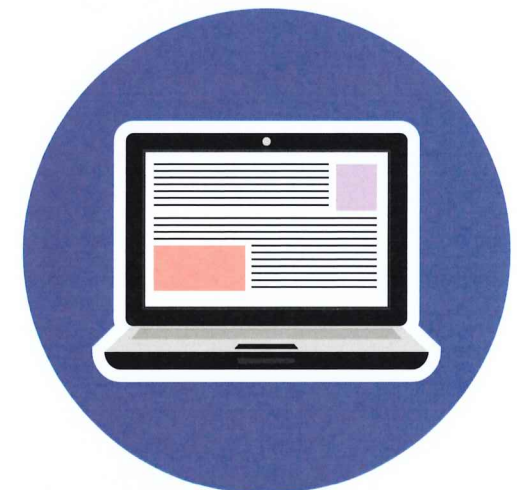
It is really hard to cope with a crying baby especially if there is no obvious sign of why they are crying, and in the first 6 – 8 weeks it is very common for babies to cry for long periods, as demonstrated by the following chart¹

¹ R.G Barr - The normal crying curve: what do we really know? Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology

Online resources

Here are some useful online resources you may find helpful

- Soothing a crying baby – NHS UK
www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/soothing-a-crying-baby/
- Getting to know your baby's cues
www.ihv.org.uk/families/getting-to-know-your-baby/
- Why is my baby crying – Parentclub
www.parentclub.scot/articles/why-my-baby-crying
- Crying – NHS Inform
www.nhsinform.scot/ready-steady-baby/early-parenthood/caring-for-your-new-baby/crying
- Icon Cope
www.iconcope.org
- NSPCC
www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/baby-parenting/



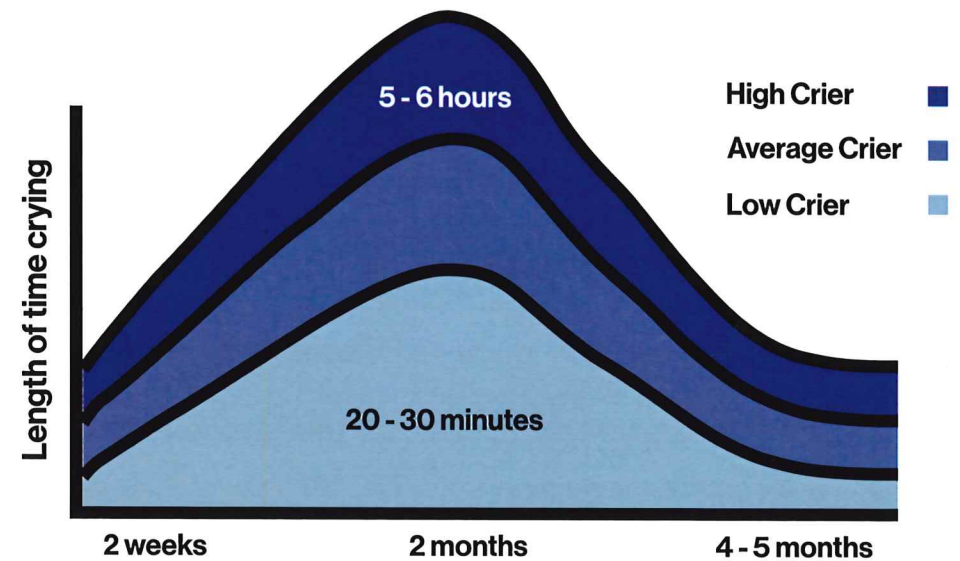
When to seek help

If your baby's crying is continuous and you cannot console or distract them, or the cry does not sound like their normal cry, it could be a sign they are ill.

You know your baby best and know what is different or worrying behaviors. Seek help if you are very concerned, from your doctor, 111 or out of hours services2.

Call 999 and ask for an ambulance if your baby:

- Has a weak, high pitched continuous cry
- Seems floppy when you pick them up
- Is under three months old and has a temperature over 38°C
- Is between three and six months old and has a high temperature over 39°C
- Has a high temperature, but their hands and feet feel cold
- Has a bulging fontanelle (the soft spot on a baby's head)
- Has had a fit (seizure or convulsion)
- Turns blue, mottled or very pale
- Has difficulty breathing, breathes fast or grunts while breathing, or seems to be working hard to breathe
- Has a spotty purple-red rash anywhere on the body (this could be a sign of meningitis).



The characteristics of prolonged crying can be explained by the acronym **PURPLE**, described below:

- P Peak crying** - your baby might cry more each week the most in the second month, then less in months three to five.
- U Unexpected** - crying can come and go and you don't know why.
- R Resists soothing** - your baby might not stop crying no matter what you try.
- P Pain-like face** - a crying baby might look like they are in pain, even when they are not. Other symptoms include pulling up their legs, screaming, going red in the face and arching their back.
- L Long lasting** - crying can last as long as five hours a day or more.
- E Evening** - your baby might cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

There is no evidence that any of these will have long-term effects on your baby's health and that it is very normal for your baby, but this can be a huge lifestyle change for you.

Coping mechanisms

Having some coping mechanisms can be great to help you deal with excessive crying in the early days and below are some tips to support you:

- No two babies are the same and all respond to different methods of comfort, trial and error may help you find the one that suits your baby and you may need to try more than one thing
- Get support with feeding if required from your midwife, health visitor or family nurse. They should carry out a breast or bottle feeding assessment for you just to make sure everything is going well with feeding
- Use skin to skin contact with you and your baby
- Sleep when your baby sleeps
- Use a sling
- Take baby for a walk in the pram or a short drive in the car
- Cuddle/gently rock baby
- Sing or talk to baby
- Play music
- Use white noise, such as the washing machine
- Warm bath
- Baby massage
- Try to settle for sleep



Keep calm

It is normal to find crying stressful to listen to when it continues for a long time. Take the following things into consideration :

- For the first few weeks try and keep things as calm as possible – this is your time to get to know your baby, and for your baby to get to know you and the family.
- Get as much help and support as possible from family and friends.
- Be reassured that it is not your fault if your baby is crying for prolonged periods. Try not to compare yourself or your baby to others.
- When the crying becomes frustrating and you have tried everything to soothe your baby, it is important to take a break. If a trusted caregiver is not available to help with the baby for a while, put your baby in a safe place and take **a few minutes** to calm yourself down, but always go back and check on your baby.
- Never shake your baby. No matter how frustrated you feel, you must never shake your baby. Shaking moves their head violently and can cause brain damage.
- If you are struggling to cope, do not be ashamed to ask for help. Talk to your partner or someone close to you. Your midwife, health visitor or family nurse are also there to talk to you about how crying is affecting you and they will support you to get help if you need it.

