



Welcome Words

On Crying and Temperament

Hello New Parent! We hope you will think of Welcome Baby Family Resource Center as your partner in parenting as you meet the wonder and challenges ahead. During the next twelve months, you will receive an edition of Welcome Words covering 6 special topics and including other resources you may find helpful. In addition to Welcome Words, Welcome Baby offers other services and classes that are described in our quarterly newsletter and website:

www.welcomebaby.org. You are also invited to call us at 919-560-7341 if you have questions or concerns. Welcome Baby is a program of Durham County and Durham County Cooperative Extension. We receive support from Durham's Partnership for Children - a Smart Start Initiative and NCHHS-Department of Community Programs.



ABOUT COLIC

It is important to remember that all babies cry. For some infants crying is more intense, lasts longer and resists soothing. These are characteristics of colic. One in five babies has colic, which usually occurs within the second or third week of life and peaks around 6 weeks. Colic is characterized by more of a high-pitched scream than a cry. The baby's legs are often drawn up to his stomach or stretched out straight, and, his face is very red. Colic often seems worse during the evening.

Many of the suggestions for soothing colic are the same as those for normal crying. Your pediatrician may have additional suggestions related to your babies' diet. You may want to visit the **American Pediatric Association's** website for parents: www.healthychildren.org. You may also want to look at the **Period of Purple Crying** for a different way to think about colic and crying which has helpful suggestions: www.purplecryingnc.info

The good news is that colic often disappears by three months and that colicky babies are usually healthy and continue to thrive, although their parents are exhausted. If you suspect colic, ask your child's doctor for advice about ways to soothe your baby or call Welcome Baby for suggestions. And don't blame yourself.

Studies show that parent anxiety is the result of colic, not the cause of it!

CRYING: HERE'S WHAT WORKS

Figuring out how to comfort your crying baby, especially during the first few months, can be a frustrating cycle of trial and error. If he cries after he's been fed, it's possible that he's still hungry. During a growth spurt, which often occurs around 3 weeks and again at 6 weeks, he'll need to eat more often and may need more at each feeding. Other likely causes of crying are discomfort from gas or indigestion, dirty diapers, pain or illness. If your baby has eaten and been burped, has a clean diaper, shows no signs of illness or pain, and recently woke up from a nap, you may feel baffled. Don't worry, gradually you'll learn how to interpret what he needs (at least some of the time).

TIPS FOR CRYING BABIES



Here are some tips that may help soothe your fussy baby. Be sure to give each method time to work. Switching too quickly from one to another may make things worse. ***It's best to respond to your baby's cries promptly since he's developing a sense of trust and security. It's impossible to spoil him during these first months.***

- Pick him up and hold him close, whispering loving words.
- A pacifier can also be a source of comfort.
- Rhythmic motion — being rocked in your arms, a cradle, carriage or, after 6 weeks, in a baby swing, may help.
- Going for a ride in a carriage, stroller or the family car, or for a walk in a front carrier, soothes many babies.
- For some babies, the combination of movement and humming noise seems to work magic. The sounds of a vacuum cleaner, clothes dryer or running water may help.
- A warm bath with you, if your baby likes it, can do the trick. Be sure the room is warm and cover him quickly afterwards if he seems to object to being naked.
- Swaddling, if done properly, is a quick and effective way to get your baby to stop crying. This method of wrapping the baby snugly in a blanket for warmth and comfort mimics the baby's experience in the womb.

WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

You are saying to yourself, "I don't need to read this because I would never shake my baby." But the sad conclusion of research on shaken babies shows that the number one reason a child is shaken **is because a parent or caregiver becomes so frustrated with a baby's crying** that they lose control and just shake them. This fact can be hard to understand, unless you have been in a situation where no matter what you tried to calm your crying infant, nothing worked.

So what can you do to help cope with your baby's crying or colic: When you feel yourself getting frustrated and/or angry when caring for a crying baby, the best thing you can do for your baby is to get away from the crying for awhile and calm down. Feeling this way does not make you a bad parent!

Try these suggestions:



- If your baby is changed, fed and not showing any symptoms of illness, it is okay to put your baby in a safe place—away from pets or small children—and go to another room and allow yourself to calm down before returning to care for your baby.
- Ask your partner or relative or trusted friend to stay with the baby while you walk around the block.
- Take a warm bath or watch a favorite TV show. A 20 –30 minute break can make a big difference. Your baby may be still crying but you know you and your baby will be okay!

YOUR BABY'S TEMPERAMENT

Each of us is born with a unique personality or temperament. Your baby's temperament shows up in **how** he reacts to his world – for example, how actively he moves, how regular he is in his hunger and sleep patterns, or how strongly he reacts to being bathed. As you observe and interact with your baby, you'll begin to understand his likes and dislikes and how he reacts to the world around him.

As your baby becomes a toddler and young child, temperament will manifest itself in his preferences, adaptability, mood, intensity, sociability, and response to stimuli—noise, touch, etc. Understanding your child's temperament helps you parent effectively and enjoy your child's unique qualities.

Many, but not all, children tend to fall into one of three broad and somewhat loosely defined categories: easy, slow to warm up or shy, or difficult or challenging. **These labels are a useful shorthand, but none offers a complete picture of a child.**

Temperament is biological and innate—not something that is learned from parents. As parents it is important to aim for a good match between your expectations and your child's temperament and abilities. When planning activities, keep your baby's or child's temperament in mind. For example, if your baby becomes over stimulated by noise, limit time at parties or family gatherings. If your child is shy, plan to take more time to prepare him for new social situations by talking about it beforehand, describe who is going to be there, the setting and what kind of things he might do.

Also, avoid labeling your child as bad or difficult to avoid a negative self image. Parents who get to know and understand their child's temperament feel better about their child and have an easier time handling behaviors that are challenging, but normal, for their child. Whether their children's temperaments are or are not easily defined, parents should keep in mind that babies are individuals. There is a wide range of what is considered to be typical infant behavior. Parents should try not to be surprised or disappointed with their baby's temperament style. Instead, parents should accept their children for the individuals they are, and learn their likes and dislikes. This acceptance will help parents develop the best relationship possible with their children.