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## Ages & Stages

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### Calming A Fussy Baby

## What is the best way to calm a fussy or colicky baby?

The following are ways you can try to comfort a crying baby. It may take a few tries, but with patience and practice you'll find out what works and what doesn't for your baby.



- **Swaddle your baby** in a large, thin blanket (ask your nurse or child's doctor to show you how to do it correctly) to help her feel secure.
- **Hold your baby** in your arms and place her body either on her left side to help digestion or on her stomach for support. Gently rub her back. If your baby goes to sleep, remember to always lay her down in her crib on her back.
- **Turn on a calming sound.** Sounds that remind babies of being inside the womb may be calming, such as a white noise device, the humming sound of a fan, or the recording of a heartbeat.
- **Walk your baby** in a body carrier or rock her. Calming motions remind babies of movements they felt in the womb.
- **Avoid overfeeding** your baby because this may also make her uncomfortable. Try to wait at least 2 to 2½ hours from the beginning of one feeding to the beginning of the next.
- **If it is not yet time to feed your baby, offer the pacifier** or help your baby find her thumb or finger. Many infants are calmed by sucking.
- **If food sensitivity is the cause of discomfort, a change in diet may help.**
  - For breastfed babies, moms may try changing their own diet. See if your baby gets less fussy if you cut down on milk products or caffeine. If there is no difference after making the dietary changes, then resume your usual diet. Avoiding spicy or gassy foods like onions or cabbage has worked for some moms, but this has not been scientifically proven.
  - For bottle-fed babies, ask your child's doctor if you should try a different formula. This has been shown to be helpful for some babies.
- **Keep a diary** of when your baby is awake, asleep, eating, and crying. Write down how long it takes your baby to eat or if your baby cries the most after eating. Talk with your baby's doctor about these behaviors to see if her crying is related to sleeping or eating.
- **Limit each daytime nap** to no longer than 3 hours a day. Keep your baby calm and quiet when you feed or change her during the night by avoiding bright lights and noises such as the TV.

## Important Information For Moms and Dads

If you are feeling stressed and ready to cry or scream, put the baby down in a safe place and take a break. Ask a family member or a friend to watch your baby for a short time. You need time to yourself, even if it's only an hour to refresh yourself. Remember: NEVER shake your baby.

Also, remember that it is OK to place the baby down in her crib for awhile, maybe 10 or 15 minutes, if she continues to cry, as long as you have made sure that she has been fed, burped, and changed and that everything is all right with her. Sometimes both you and your baby need a break.

Let your own health care provider know if you are experiencing depression or are having a very difficult time with your emotions.

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**Source** Crying and Your Baby: How to Calm a Fussy or Colicky Baby (Copyright © 2008 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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