

## YOUR CRYING BABY

### Newborn to 6 months

#### Responding Sensitively to Crying

Crying is a baby's way of communicating. It can be overwhelming when you are having difficulty understanding what they want. Crying can mean many things, for instance wanting a change of activity, a feed, a cuddle or a sleep.

Distress can be indicated by an increase in the intensity, loudness or tone of the cry, whereas tiredness is usually a quieter more grizzly tone that stops and starts.

Getting accustomed to your baby's cues can help you gain a better understanding of their needs.



#### Crying baby

Most babies have periods of crying which can last for 1 – 3 hours, once or twice a day. This usually improves at around 4 months.

Waking at night is common. Even at 12 months, 25 – 40% of children wake and may need your help to get back to sleep.

It's hard to settle a baby if you're upset too! Take some time to calm down, then try the following tips.

#### Crying Baby Tips

##### 1. Does your baby need comfort or attention?

Pick up your baby and offer some cuddles and soothing words! Wrap your baby if they're not rolling yet (see our guide on wrap-ping). Otherwise, calm them by holding them closely and gently.

##### 2. Does your baby need a nappy change?

Your baby may find a wet or dirty nappy uncomfortable. If left unchanged, it could lead to a rash. Use your judgement on whether to change it now.

##### 3. Does your baby need a burp?

Sometimes, but not always, a baby will feel more comfortable if 'burped' after feeding. There's no need to try for more than a couple of minutes. It does not matter if your baby does not burp.

##### 4. Is your baby hungry?

Follow your instincts, but if your baby has fed in the last 2 hours, try some of the tips above to help them settle, before offering food.

##### 5. Is your baby comfortable?

Check that your baby is not too hot or cold by placing your hand on the baby's chest or tummy.

A good rule on how to dress your baby comfortably is to add one extra layer to what you are wearing.

In cold weather, warm the room, but make sure it is well ventilated so it doesn't overheat.

In hot weather, cool the room, but don't direct a fan or air conditioner straight onto the cot, or let the room get too cold.

##### 6. Does your baby want to suck?

Some newborn baby's have a strong urge to suck and find that it calms them. Allow your baby to suck if they want to.

##### 7. Is your baby overtired?

You might want to check for 'tired signs' to understand what your baby might be telling you. Your baby may wake at the end of a sleep cycle and not be able to resettle without your help. Responding consistently to your baby's sleep needs helps them learn good sleep habits. For more information on sleep cycles see our Understanding Sleep Brochure.

##### 8. Is there too much going on?

Reduce stimulation by making the room dark and quiet. Gentle soft music or quiet background noise can help your baby, if they are having difficulty calming down.

## SEEKING HELP



### 9. Is your baby unwell?

Take your baby's temperature. It should be between 36.8 and 37.4 degrees centigrade. For more on fevers, you can read the Westmead Children's Hospital Fever Fact Sheet (see [www.kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/fact-sheets](http://www.kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/fact-sheets)). Talk to your doctor if concerned. For common childhood medical issues, refer to the Westmead Children's Hospital fact sheets or contact Healthdirect on 1800 022 222 to speak with a registered nurse (24 hours a day, 7 days)

### 10. Do you need a break?

Having a crying baby for any length of time can be stressful.

When you are feeling upset, frustrated or about to lose control, the best thing to do is take a break. If possible, get someone else to take over. If this is not possible, place your baby in a safe place, such as a cot (with the sides up). Leave the room and take some deep breaths.

A break of 1 – 2 minutes can really make a difference!

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References available on request.  
For more parenting information,  
visit [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

### Get Help!

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Call a friend, family member or the Karitane Careline on **1300 227 464** for support and encouragement.



The Australian Government also provides a 24 hour helpline for parents and carers. You can call Pregnancy, Birth and Baby on 1800 882 436 or visit [www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au](http://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au)



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*support for women, partners & families*

If you're concerned about the health of your baby, call healthdirect to speak to a registered nurse 24/7 on 1800 022 222 or visit [www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)



**[www.karitane.com.au](http://www.karitane.com.au)**

PO Box 241, Villawood NSW 2163  
Tel: 02 9794 2300 Fax: 02 9794 2323  
ABN 25 000 018 842 Charity No.: 12991

**For Parenting information:**

[www.karitane.com.au/mybabyandme](http://www.karitane.com.au/mybabyandme)  
[Karitane.online@sswahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Karitane.online@sswahs.nsw.gov.au)  
Careline 1300 CARING (1300 227 464)