



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

## Helping Hand™

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# Calming a Fussy Baby

Your baby's cry is how they communicate with you. Babies cry so they can be fed, put to sleep, or have their diaper changed. All babies cry, especially in the first 6 months of life. During this period, most babies can cry for 45 minutes to 2 hours each day.

Colic, crying that occurs for more than 3 hours every day, most often during the evening, is a common cause of babies being fussy. The cause of colic is not known. It typically peaks between 6 and 8 weeks of age. Colic will improve on its own, but there are some things parents can do to help stop the crying.

### Soothe your infant

**NEVER** shake your baby to make them stop crying! Shaking can damage your baby's brain.

You may have to try a few different things before you find what calms your infant. Here are some ideas for calming a baby:

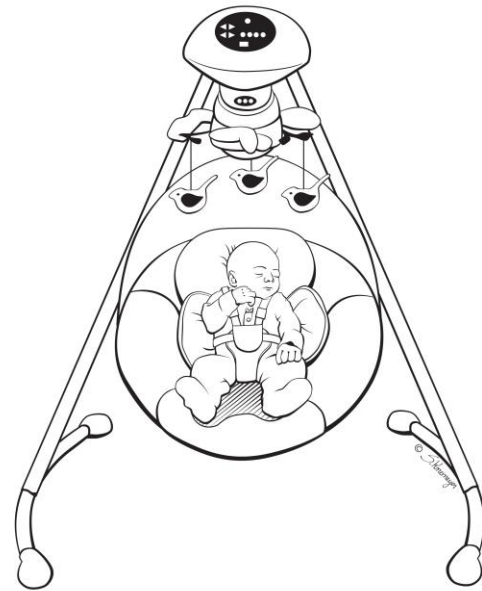
- Make sure all of the baby's comfort needs are met. Babies like to be dry, dressed warmly but not overheated, and well fed.
- Use a pacifier. Some babies learn to comfort themselves by sucking.
- Stroke your baby's head from the front of the forehead to the back of the neck. Cover as much of the head with your hand as you can. Stroke slowly, one stroke for each breath you take in. You can do this while holding them or after the baby is lying on their back in a crib. Many babies will fall asleep with this gentle massage. Try adding a comforting shhh or humming sound.
- Try gently stroking the infant's belly.



**Picture 1** Gently rub the baby's head to help them fall asleep.

- Some babies may calm down with a slow, gentle motion-like swinging (Picture 2). Even if they like the swinging motion, do not overdo it by putting the baby in the swing all of the time. If the baby falls asleep in the swing, gently move them to a crib with no toys, blankets, or bumpers. Always place them on their back.

- Take the infant for a ride in the car or stroller.
- The baby may need a change of scenery. Walk around the house with the baby or go into another room.
- Dim the lights.
- Give your baby a warm bath.
- Cuddle your baby against your body while you walk or sit in a rocking chair.



**Picture 2** Some babies may calm down while they are in a swing.

- Play soft music or hum.
- Put your baby in a dark, quiet room with no distractions for the best sleep. Some babies prefer a room with a soothing background noise like a fan, a ticking clock, white noise, or soft music.
- If your baby falls asleep somewhere other than their crib, move them to an empty crib. There should not be blankets, toys, or bumpers in the crib. Gently place them on their back. Disturb their position as little as possible. Sharp or sudden movements can wake your baby up, especially if they are in an upright position.
- **If you get to the point where you are very frustrated with crying and you feel angry at yourself or your baby, it is time to take a break.**
- If you have a family member or another trusted adult, ask for help. If you are alone be sure the baby is fed, dry, and safe. Leave them in the crib while you step away to another room until you can calm down or help arrives.
- If you are calm, your baby is more likely to be calm.

## Other information

- Babies less than 6 months of age cannot be spoiled.
- Your baby is not mad at you or rejecting you when they are fussy.
- Fussiness will lessen as your baby grows.

## **When to call the health care provider**

Most of the time, the crying will stop when the baby's comfort needs are met. Call their health care provider if any of these occur:

- cries constantly for more than 3 hours
- their cry sounds different or like they are in pain
- vomiting, diarrhea, or not feeding well
- your baby cannot be soothed
- you feel scared that you are tired, angry, or you might hurt the baby
- your baby is ill, especially if they have a fever of 100.4 ° Fahrenheit (F) or 38 ° Celsius (C) or more