

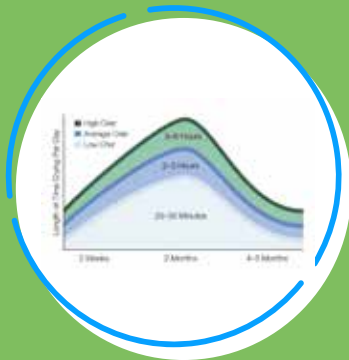


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I is for Infant Crying is Normal

Babies cry for many reasons. They are hardwired to cry whenever they need a parent to help them out because their brains have yet to develop the circuits that allow for self-control or understanding. Crying is meant to be upsetting for a parent, that is Nature's way of making sure they pay attention fairly promptly. A cry might signal many things, discomfort and startle are common examples. Sometimes, though babies cry for no reason at all and sometimes they cry and just cannot be settled. The latter may be upsetting for both baby and parent, but it causes no harm and will eventually cease. After about 5 months the experts say that crying becomes more 'purposeful'. That means **after** 5 months of age, your baby is more likely to be crying for a reason



The 'Normal Crying Curve' shows how babies start to cry more frequently at about 2 weeks of age. The crying may get more frequent and last longer during the next few weeks, hitting a peak at about 6 – 8 weeks, sometimes a little later. Every baby is different but after about 2 – 3 months, babies start to cry less and less each week.

Barr RG. The normal crying curve: what do we really know? *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology* 1990;32(4):356-362.



Even though it is normal for babies to cry more from about 2 weeks, it is still important to check a few basic needs. Check they aren't poorly and try some comforting methods (see C is for Comforting for more ideas about how to soothe your baby). Babies that are born prematurely start to cry more about 2 weeks after the date when they were due to be born.



Sometimes we search for a 'physical' reason for why our baby is crying. Can it be they are intolerant to cows milk? Do they have gastro reflux? All of these are normal things to think about. It might surprise you to know that research has found that most of the time there is nothing wrong with your baby that is making them cry more. They are a new human being getting used to their new environment.



Whether or not there is a reason for your baby to cry, it can be upsetting and frustrating. The crying can really get to you and it can sound worse when you are already under pressure and stress for other reasons. This is all normal. These feelings are sometimes hard to overcome. If you are finding it hard to get over them, getting some support is normal and a positive thing to do for yourself and for your baby.

When you have checked your baby's needs and tried the comforting methods you have found worked before, your baby may carry on crying. This means that their distress and your distress just add onto each other. When this happens, and it will, all you can really do is cope with the crying as much as you can and manage your feelings of stress. Knowing this is a normal phase and that it will pass will help you.



If you think your baby is unwell, contact your Health Visitor, NHS 111 or your GP.

It is a good idea to have a think about how you can help yourself cope at this time before it happens. That's better than waiting for it to happen. Think about the following things and you may want to write them down:

- Who can I go to for help with crying?
- What will I do if I need a few minutes to myself?
- What makes me feel better?
- What makes me feel calmer?

Remember the ICON message:

Infant crying is normal and it will stop

Comfort methods will sometimes help and the crying will stop.

OK to walk away for a few minutes to calm down if the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.

Never ever shake or hurt a baby.