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Why Do Babies Cry?

Newborn crying in the first 3 months

The most common cause for a baby's crying during the first 3 months is to alert you that they need to re-establish close, physical contact with you.

When your young baby can't see you she doesn't know where you are so needs your physical presence for comfort. This is why your baby fusses and cries when they can't see, hear or feel you. When you don't come soon enough your baby will get more and more distressed and cry more loudly and persistently.

The more distressed your baby gets the harder it is for your baby to calm down.

When you respond to your baby's cries quickly with reassurance, warmth and affection they'll feel safe and secure and usually calm down more quickly. Then she can enjoy a feed or play. This is how your baby forms their attachment to you. This is vital in helping your baby's brain to grow and develop in a healthy way.

Your young baby will cry more when you're separated from them and calm once you're physically back together again. This type of cry for help and attention is a normal response to a physical or emotional need.

Physical reasons for crying are easy to understand and might be:

- A nappy change
- A feed
- A sleep
- A tummy upset
- Being hot or cold

An emotional need means your baby needs help managing feelings because babies are too young to do that on their own. These are feelings of:

- Loneliness
- Anger
- Fear
- Sadness
- Overstimulation

Your baby needs to stay close to you so you can help to calm and soothe them. This will help manage their feelings when they get distressed and overwhelmed.

Your very young baby is having lots of new physical and emotional experiences that can be exhausting for them. When your baby gets overwhelmed and cries for you it has a very powerful effect on you and triggers a physical and psychological reaction which causes you some distress. This is normal and as nature intended, otherwise you wouldn't go and help your baby!

The best ways to respond to your distressed baby are:

- Make sure you are calm yourself
- Use a soothing calm voice
- Sing a soothing song
- Show your baby your face and eyes

- Gently touch and cuddle your baby
- Rock your baby by swaying side to side very gently
- Swaddle your baby's arms in the wrap to make sure they're not startling themselves with waving arms
- Use gentle, slow repetitious patting

In the first 3 months crying is the best way your baby has to communicate their urgent needs. You can work out how urgent your baby's cry is by the pitch and urgency, but you won't know what's causing your baby to cry.

The more experienced you become in responding to your baby, observing your baby's non-verbal communications and trying out ways to soothe your baby the better you'll understand what your baby is trying to tell you.

Responding quickly and lovingly each time your baby cries is thought to reduce the overall amount of crying a baby does.

The slower you respond to your baby, the more your baby will cry and the longer it takes for your baby to calm down.

Some people still believe that you will encourage your baby to cry more if you pick your baby up when they cry – this is not true. It's important to know that you are not spoiling your baby by picking your baby up when they cry.

You're not spoiling your baby and if you think about it you have exactly the same needs when you cry. You

would probably like someone to reassure and comfort you. Your baby has exactly the same needs, except your baby's needs are even more urgent because your baby is totally reliant on you for comfort, reassurance, and to keep them safe when they are upset and need help.

Crying is a normal way for your baby to communicate that they need you to give them love, attention, comfort and reassurance.

When you respond to your baby's cry and help them out it helps your baby develop an understanding that when they ask for help they will get it. This is how your baby's attachment and relationship with you grows and develops.

Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
 - Breastfeeding
 - Infant nutrition
 - Toddler behaviour
 - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
 - Postnatal depression and anxiety

For Parenting Support or to Self Refer to a Tresillian Service call:

Tresillian Parent's Help Line
1300 272 736

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