

Why Does My Baby Cry?

All babies cry, and some cry a lot.

When it's your baby who is crying a lot, it can be very frustrating and upsetting for you, too. You try burping him, rocking him - and he's still wailing. What's wrong? You might be worried about making enough milk to fill him. Or think that your milk is not good enough. Or maybe you are worried that something you are eating is upsetting his tummy through your milk.

You're not alone in these concerns. Many mothers worry about these things. But most of the time, your baby's crying has nothing to do with the quality or amount of milk in your breasts.

The truth is that there are many reasons babies cry. Crying is one way your baby communicates with you, but at first it can be a challenge to figure out what he's trying to tell you.



In the first few days:

Your baby is adjusting to life out in the world. He's been through some big changes! When he fusses or cries, offering the breast can easily comfort him.

At first, your breasts produce small amounts of colostrum, but your baby is soothed by sucking, by being held skin-to-skin and by hearing your familiar voice and heartbeat. His frequent feedings also signal your breasts to make more milk.

He's not likely to follow a firm pattern or schedule for feeding. He might breastfeed very frequently for a few hours and then sleep for a longer period of time. Or he might just have an irregular pattern with his feedings. Some babies will feed 8 or 9 times a day, others will nurse more than 12 times a day. That's all normal.

Crying and breastfeeding problems:

It can be very frustrating when you try to breastfeed, but the baby just cries and can't seem to find the nipple or suck properly. It might help to just cuddle your baby against your bare skin with her head near your shoulder for a few minutes, until she calms down. Then try again. Maybe try a laid-back position so she can feel your skin and start to move to the breast on her own.

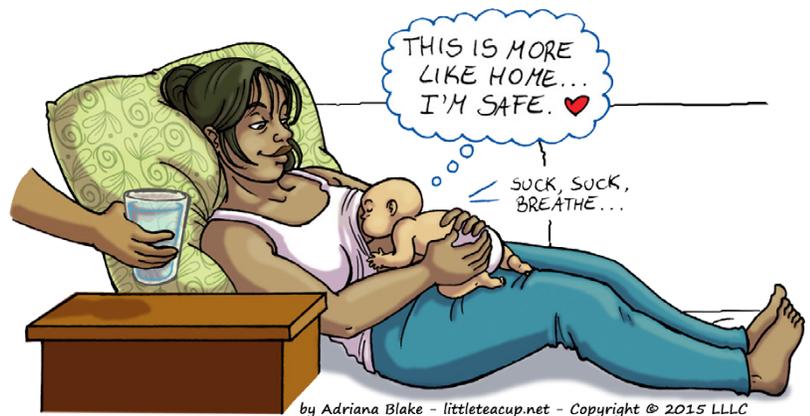
Remember, she's learning to do something brand new, so it may take her more than a few minutes to latch on to the breast. Be patient with your baby, and ask for help (from a La Leche League Leader, lactation consultant, midwife or nurse) if you are worried.

After day three or four:

At this point, the amount of milk in your breasts will increase significantly. Your baby may have trouble latching on to your fuller breasts, and that might cause more crying. Try to express a little milk to make your breasts softer and help him latch on. If that doesn't work, ask for some help.

Your baby lost weight in the first few days (as he got rid of the dark-coloured poop called meconium that was previously in his gut) but now he will start gaining. Between 5 and 8 ounces or 140-250 grams each week is typical. That means he is getting plenty of milk - one worry you can cross off your list! In between weight checks, just watch to be sure he has at least 6 heavy wet diapers and 3 or 4 poopy diapers every 24 hours. (He may poop less often after one month.)

If your baby is not gaining weight as expected after day four, talk to your doctor or midwife. There are things you can do to help your baby get more milk at the breast.



Does your baby cry a lot in the evenings? Many mothers find their babies are extra-fussy in the evening hours. If you can, just relax on the couch or in a rocking chair and let the baby nurse as much as he wants.

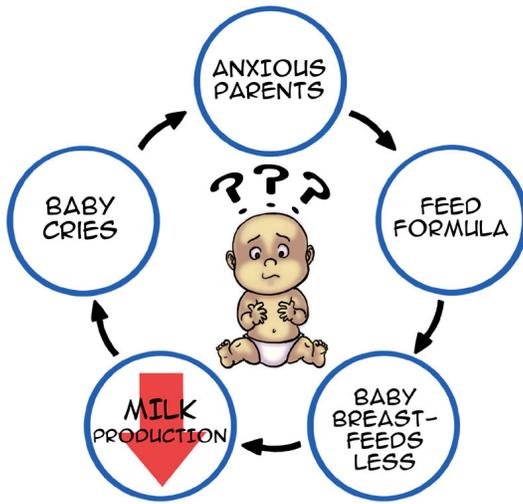
Worried that something you are eating or drinking is bothering your baby? Most babies aren't bothered by anything their mothers eat or drink, but some are. You could talk to a La Leche League Leader or lactation consultant about this if you think it is a problem for your baby.

Why Does My Baby Cry?

In the first two months:

Many babies have “growth spurts” or “frequency days” as they grow. This happens around 3 weeks and 6 weeks. You’ll notice that suddenly your usually happy baby will start to cry a lot and want to nurse much more often – sometimes all day long! This is normal. Usually after two or three days your baby goes back to his previous pattern of breastfeeding and seems more content. Those days of frequent feedings have boosted your milk supply to meet his needs.

Why Not Formula?



What else could it be?

Most of the time a baby’s crying or fussing has nothing to do with breastfeeding. Babies are all different: some are more sensitive and intense than others. One baby might not wake up if a dog barks; while another will wake up crying and keep crying. Crying is the loudest way your baby can communicate. He’s not trying to drive you crazy or manipulate you; he’s trying to let you know “something is wrong!”

How do you know what’s wrong? Sometimes your baby cries because he wants to be close to you, hear your voice, and feel your warmth, just as he did before he was born. Over time, you’ll get to know your baby and understand his unique cries and signals.

Some things to try:

- ♥ Offer the breast, even if your baby nursed a short time ago. He may just need a little dessert! Even if he is not very hungry, breastfeeding might calm him.
- ♥ Hold him close to you – perhaps undressing him so that you can be skin to skin. That contact often helps the baby stop crying.
- ♥ Take a walk with him. Babies love to move, and they love the rhythm of an adult walking. Use a wrap or soft baby carrier if you have one, or just carry him as you stroll around your kitchen or around the block. You can also rock in a rocking chair.
- ♥ Talk or sing to her. Your baby has been listening to your voice for months before she was born, and she loves the sound of it.
- ♥ Take a bath together. If your baby is feeling tense, snuggling with you in warm water might just be the relaxation she needs. A helper can place the baby in your arms once you’re in the water.
- ♥ If nothing is working, try offering the breast again. She might be ready to latch on and nurse a bit more now.

A helping hand

Sometimes all you can do for your baby is to be there while he cries. He will be reassured by your touch and closeness, even if he continues to cry. If your baby cries a lot, and you are getting frustrated, ask someone to help you out. Perhaps your partner or a friend or family member can hold or carry the baby while you have a break.

Here’s the good news: even babies who cry a lot tend to do less and less crying as they reach two or three months of age. Your love and support will help him learn that the world is a caring place and that he can trust you to be there for him.

This document has been prepared with funds provided by the Government of Ontario. The information herein reflects the views of the authors and is not officially endorsed by the Government of Ontario

