



## Patient Information : Crying Baby

### Cork Emergency Medicine

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### Crying and Unsettled Babies

"Colic" has been the common word used to describe regular times of crying and not settling in a baby. It is now more widely understood that "colic" refers to the normal range of unsettled behaviour in many babies. This can be very demanding and exhausting for parents.

This crying and fussing can happen at any time, but often occurs in the late afternoon and evening, especially in babies between 2 weeks and 4 months of age. It is very common for young infants to have crying and unsettled times.

### What causes the crying?

Sometimes there is a medical reason for the baby's crying and this may need to be checked by a doctor or nurse. However, in most babies no medical cause is found. Young babies cry as a normal response to any sort of discomfort or stress. Sometimes the causes of the discomfort may be a wet nappy, being too hot or cold, wind, hunger, or tiredness.

This is a normal part of their growth and development. The temperament of some babies makes them more likely to cry for longer periods and to be more difficult to settle into a predictable routine.

Some babies seem to cry more than others – this does not necessarily mean that there is anything wrong, rather that all babies respond differently.

Parents also worry that crying is caused by something they have done, and this can sometimes affect their confidence in handling their baby. Parents should be reassured that a number of things can help them with a difficult baby. The most important is to get support from the family and talk to a health professional such as a maternal and child health nurse or doctor.

### Key points to remember about crying & unsettled babies

- Being unsettled and crying is common in young babies up to 4 months old
- Sometimes there is a medical reason for the baby's crying
- Comfort your baby if they seem distressed
- The temperament of some babies makes them more likely to cry for longer periods and be more unsettled

If you are concerned, please contact the  
Emergency Department you first attended:

Mercy University  
Hospital  
(021) 4271971

M-UCC at  
SMHC (St.  
Mary's Health  
Campus)  
(021) 4926900

CUH  
(021) 4920200

Mallow General  
Hospital  
(022) 21251

Bantry General  
Hospital  
(027) 52900



- Try and have breaks from your child, or have an afternoon nap before the early evening.

### Care At Home

- Let your baby suck at the breast or bottle. It may help them to settle for a short period – your nurse or doctor can advise you on feeding and the amount of milk your baby needs.
- Gently rock or hold your baby in your arms or in a baby carrier or sling.
- Continue to speak softly to your baby – your voice and presence may help soothe them, as may soft music.
- Try giving a warm bath
- Use a dummy – it may provide comfort sucking to help your baby settle.
- The demanding evening time may be easier if you plan around it eg. carry the baby in the evening and eat earlier.
- Soften the lighting – some babies are distressed by looking up into harsh lights.
- Try baby massage oil this may calm the baby and also help you relax.
- If possible try and get support from family and friends and have a break from the baby so you can relax.
- If your baby is crying for most of the day then it is important to get support and talk to a health professional during this difficult time.
- Talk with other parents about things that have helped them.
- Remember, you cannot spoil your baby by too much cuddling or feeding.

### Medication

- Medication is not recommended as it calms babies and makes them sleepy.
- Medication should be used on the advice of a doctor and then only for a short period of time.

### Come back to this department if:

- You would like the doctor to check there is no medical cause for the crying
- Your baby is refusing feeds or is having less than half their normal feeds
- Your baby does not seem to settle with any of the things you are trying
- Your baby continues to cry for long periods
- You feel you are not coping

OR you are worried for any other reason.

### Doctor's name from this consultation:

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