

Understanding Your Baby's Behavior

BIRTH TO 6 MONTHS

HEALTHY SLEEP

for you and your baby

What your
baby is saying

Your baby's
HUNGER
cues

Why do
BABIES CRY?



Congratulations!

Part of the wonder and joy of being a new parent is to watch your baby's personality develop. Your baby is growing and constantly changing. Over the next few months, your baby will learn how to roll over, sit up, and crawl. Enjoy all the moments ahead of you!

It does not take long for you and your baby to develop your own special language.

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Your baby is here!

YOUR NEWBORN'S FIRST 3 DAYS

DAY 1:

- Your newborn may be alert for about 2 hours after birth, followed by longer periods of sleep over the next 24 hours.
- Especially when you are breastfeeding, babies often learn quicker if their first feeding is during this alert time right after birth, so it is important to feed them then.
- Hold and feed your newborn baby while awake. You will bond with your baby during the first hours providing a lifelong attachment.



DAYS 2 AND 3:

- Your newborn is more alert. Her tummy is small and she will want to eat often.
- You may feel that your newborn is crying a lot. Crying does not always mean hunger. Try reducing the noise, dimming the lights, and allowing fewer people to hold her. Holding your newborn skin-to-skin will help calm her. Skin-to-skin works with dads, too.
- Everything is new to your newborn so she may become overly tired. This makes it hard for her to sleep and she may become very fussy.
- It will take some time for you and your newborn baby to learn about each other. You will get better with practice.

What Your Baby is Saying

Understanding Your Baby's Cues

Do you find it hard to know what your baby needs? Do you want to know how to help your baby be calm and happy?

Your baby actually has ways other than crying to tell you what he needs. Your baby uses his body and makes noises to tell you what he needs. We call these little signs "cues".

Looking for cues can make it easier for you to help your baby be calm and happy.



“I want to be near you.”

“Near you” cues are things your baby does to let you know he wants to be with you. As your newborn gets older, you will be better able to tell when he is ready to interact, learn or play.

He might:

- Have a relaxed face and body
- Follow your voice and face
- Reach toward you
- Stare at your face
- Raise his head



Some cues are very obvious, but others may be harder to notice.

“I need a break.”

Learning is hard work for babies and they can tire quickly. Your baby will show you signs that he needs something to be different.

He might:

- Look away, turn away, or arch his back
- Frown or have a glazed look in his eyes
- Stiffen his hands, arms or legs
- Yawn or fall asleep



Responding to cues quickly before your baby starts to fuss may help your baby cry less.

Tips for parents

When you see cues that your baby is **ready to be near you**, you should...

- ✓ Interact and play with him. This is the best time for your baby to learn, play, and feed.
- ✓ Keep in mind that learning is hard work. Your baby can get tired very quickly.

When you notice that your baby **needs a break**, here are some things to try...

- ✓ Let your baby turn away and have a break. Quiet time is good for both of you!
- ✓ Change the environment. A lot of noise or crowds of people can be very tiring for him.
- ✓ Stop interactions. Sometimes even siblings can be too much for your baby to handle. If too many people have held him, let him lie quietly for a few minutes.

Use a repetitive motion to sooth your baby, such as rocking, singing, or lightly patting his back.

Understanding Your Baby's Hunger Cues

Many times your baby will show hunger cues before he starts crying. If you look for these hunger cues, you can respond to them before your baby starts to cry. It will be much easier to feed your baby when he is calm!

How will you know when your baby is hungry?

How do you tell if your baby is hungry?



When your baby is hungry he may:

- Keep his hands near his mouth
- Bend his arms and legs
- Make sucking noises
- Pucker his lips
- Search for the nipple (rooting)
- May give several cues together

How do you tell when your baby is full?

When your baby is full he may:

- Suck slower or stop sucking
- Relax his hands and arms
- Turn away from the nipple
- Push away
- Fall asleep





Why does your baby cry?

It can be very upsetting when your baby cries.
Crying is normal, but there are things you can do to reduce it.

All Babies Cry

Sometimes it is easy to know what your baby needs, like a diaper change! Other times it seems like babies cry for no reason at all.

The average 6-week-old baby cries for a total of about two hours per day.

When you try to help, it may take awhile for them to calm down. Babies need some time to respond.

Crying is a baby's super power! Babies need help being soothed until they can do it on their own.

Watch for these signs to learn why your baby is crying

Many times she will show signs before she starts crying. To reduce crying, you can watch for these cues, respond quickly and help her be more comfortable.

Babies cry for many reasons, not just because they are hungry.



If the cry is because your baby is hungry, she might:

- Make sucking noises
- Pucker her lips
- Keep her hands near her mouth
- Search for the nipple (rooting)
- Bend her arms and legs

If the cry is because your baby needs a break, she might:

- Turn or push away
- Stretch out her fingers
- Have tense muscles in her face and body
- Rub her eyes and yawn

You will have to figure out what is going on that needs to change.



Your baby will cry less often as you get better at understanding and responding to her needs.



Crying is upsetting for parents, but it is important for babies, so they can ask for help.

Tips to help you cope with your crying baby:

- ✓ Try to remain calm and patient. It could take several minutes before your baby settles down.
- ✓ If you notice yourself getting angry, put the baby down in his bed or a safe place. While you walk out of the room take some deep breaths to become calmer. **DO NOT EVER SHAKE THE BABY!** It can cause brain damage or death!
- ✓ Look for cues or signs to see what your baby is telling you.
- ✓ Hold your baby close to your body, so he can hear your heartbeat.
- ✓ Sing the same tune softly to her, over and over.
- ✓ Rock or sway back and forth in a steady rhythm.

Understanding Your Baby's Sleep



Light Sleep

Your baby needs light sleep for her brain to grow and develop. Babies dream during light sleep. Dreaming is healthy for her.

During Light Sleep Your Baby:

- Moves around and makes noises
- Has eye twitches or opens and closes her eyes quickly
- Has fast and slow breathing
- Dreams
- Wakes up easily
- Her brain is stimulated to grow and develop

Deep Sleep

Your baby needs deep sleep for her brain to rest.

During Deep Sleep Your Baby:

- Does not move very much
- Has relaxed and floppy arms and legs
- Has regular steady breathing
- Makes sucking movements
- Does not wake up easily
- Might startle

Sleep Patterns Change!

- Newborns sleep 16 hours per day. They start sleeping in light sleep and move to deep sleep after about 20 minutes.
- By 6 to 8 weeks, they will sleep more at night.
- By 12 weeks, babies sleep more like adults and begin sleep cycles in deep sleep. They wake up less often.
- Older babies sleep 13 to 14 hours per day.








Tips for Better Sleep.

- ✓ Wait a little while to put baby down after feeding, or put baby down while he is drowsy but still awake.
- ✓ Play time and physical activity during the day are important for good sleep at night.
- ✓ Turn off lights and TV where the baby sleeps.
- ✓ Rest while your baby sleeps. Even sitting quietly can help you feel more rested.

Take the quiz to see how much you learned.

Your baby cannot talk yet, but he is already trying to tell you how he feels. Can you read his signs? Find out by matching each baby with what you think he or she is telling you. Then check the answers below to see how you did.

If your baby is doing this...	He/she is trying to tell you...	Choices (Use each only once)
 <div>1 Aaliyah has glassy or puffy eyes and is yawning.</div>	<div></div>	<div>A</div> <div>"I am hungry."</div>
 <div>2 Manuel is arching his back, scrunching up his face, and letting out a piercing cry.</div>	<div></div>	<div>B</div> <div>"I am sleepy."</div>
 <div>3 Lily is turning her head toward you and staring at your face.</div>	<div></div>	<div>C</div> <div>"Something hurts."</div>
 <div>4 Derek is opening his mouth, making sucking noises, moving his hands to his mouth.</div>	<div></div>	<div>D</div> <div>"I need a break."</div>
 <div>5 Carlos is looking away from you, stretching out his fingers, and tensing up his face and body.</div>	<div></div>	<div>E</div> <div>"I want to be near you."</div>

1 = B Aaliyah is sleepy. Put her in a safe place (like her crib) as soon as she shows these signs. This way, she will not get overtired and fuss or cry.
2 = C Manuel is saying, "Something hurts" or "Something is bothering me." For instance, he might be lying in a bad position, may need to burp, his clothes may be too tight, or he may be dressed too warmly.
3 = E Lily wants to be near you. So hold her close, either in your arms or in a sling. You cannot spoil a baby, so cuddle her as much as she wants!
4 = A Derek is hungry. Look for these hunger signs so you can feed him before he fusses or cries.
5 = D Carlos needs a break. Your newborn has a very short attention span, so he may need a break after only playing for a few minutes.

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