



All babies cry – so why do some cry more than others?

Major changes in life after birth

When a child is born, it loses the protective covering of the uterus, in which it has grown for nine months. Here there was no clearly differentiated day and night rhythm. The child did not have to deal with breathing and nutrition by itself. Relatively well shielded from disruptive influences from outside, it was able to develop in peace. After the birth, the child's immediate environment changes in every respect. It has to acquire the body heat it needs and breathe independently. Gravity is difficult to deal with and it moves in a rather uncoordinated manner. It can no longer determine its sleep times entirely by itself but will be influenced by the routine rhythms of its family over the coming weeks and months. Eating and digestion are new and may provoke physical sensations that the child finds unfamiliar or unpleasant.

Colic?

There used to be a belief that frequent crying had to do with digestion. Reference was made to the so-called three-month colic. It is certainly conceivable that crying leads to swallowing air. Along with all the exertion the consequences of digestion and abdominal pain are feasible. However, closer observations show that children who cry a lot have other problems.

The baby's adjustment process after birth

There are considerable differences in how long a baby needs for the adjustment process after birth and how easily irritable it is as such. **Most children cope with these new circumstances much better at age three months.** At this time, they have found their place in their new world to some extent. It may be the case that babies who cry often seem to change their personality overnight.

Babies who barely calm down in the first three months and beyond show **peculiarities in regulating their behavior.**



The baby finds it more difficult

- To achieve deep sleep
- To be really awake and happy
- To manage the change between behavioral states
- To deal with stimulus from its parents
- To show definite signs of tiredness

The baby may show the following behavior

- It is often in transitional states such as whining or dozing
- It suddenly starts crying
- It is jumpy
- It does not like frequent changes in its environment
- It reacts with irritation in unfamiliar surroundings

In troubled phases it is a challenge for the child

- To calm down and fall asleep
- To get enough sleep

Babies who often cry need more time to develop the ability to calm themselves. For example, **sucking a thumb or fist** helps the child to calm down or **if it averts its eyes**, it can deal with irritation.

What you can do

It is important first of all to support the child in developing a regular sleep and wake pattern. Prof. Mechthild Papoušek provides the following tips.

Reduce irritation → create shared islands of peace during the day – a darkened room, soft music, gentle rocking in your arms, soothing humming, sweet-talking or singing.

Avoid excessive tiredness → After an hour to 90 minutes since the last time the baby awoke, gradually get the baby to rest and early to sleep.

Regular rhythm → Initiate a cyclical sequence of waking up – breastfeeding / bottle feeding (possibly followed by a nap) – awake stage – then sleep. Start this rhythm afresh every morning.

Use the waking stages → Use the waking stages for relaxed chatting, games and stimulus. The calmer the waking period, the easier it is for the baby to fall asleep and the more restful its sleep will be.



Critical crying periods during the day or evening → Get over them, for example, by going for a walk or drive. If you are very tense and tired yourself, lay the child down and relax yourself first before calming the child.

Sedatives and sleeping aids

There is no panacea. More important than the method is

1. Regularity, getting the baby used to certain routines, avoiding constant change, always trying out new things and vigorous stimulation
2. Proceed gently without any hassle

About one quarter of all parents complain about their child's extreme crying and whining. It therefore occurs not that infrequently. It is a challenging task to take care of a baby who cries often.

Red alert!

Try to calm down.

Never shake your baby.

Never give your baby sedative drugs.

Seek help as soon as possible.

Parenting advice service, district of Baden: 056 437 18 40

Or parent emergency: 0848 35 45 55

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