

Crying & Gas

Nothing is more frustrating than an infant's cry. Since they are unable to communicate it is often difficult to ascertain what the cause is for their crying. Often the crying is secondary to hunger, fatigue, gas, colic, or sometimes pain or illness. The average infant at 2 - 3 weeks of age cries approximately 1 and 1/2 hours per day which is unrelated to hunger. This increases to about 3 hours per day by 6 - 8 weeks of age. The good news is that the crying gradually decreases to about 1 hour per day by the time your infant is 3 months old. If your infant has been recently fed, burped, changed, and is not caught between the bars of the crib; then it is okay to let him/her cry for a few minutes. Very often infants will settle down by themselves. The parent has then succeeded in teaching the infant the very important lesson of self-quieting skills. If your threshold for crying is short, you won't feel comfortable allowing your baby to cry for even five minutes. However, if you are able to, it is okay to let the crying continue for 15-20 minutes during which the child may fall asleep. If the crying spell is unusually lengthy or if the child appears ill then please take the temperature and refer to the section on fever in this book.

Gas is all too often blamed as the cause of an infant's crying. In many cases it is difficult to ascertain which came first. 1) Did the gas cause the infant to cry? 2) Did the persistent crying cause the infant to swallow a great deal of air resulting in the baby being gassy? If the crying stops as soon as your child passes gas and does not return for quite some time, then gas is probably the culprit. In that instance it is worth trying some mylicon drops to remedy the problem. The dosage for an infant would be up to 0.3 ml orally with each feeding, not to exceed 12 doses per 24 hours. If the mother is breastfeeding then some changes may have to be made in mom's diet (Refer to section on Breastfeeding). However, other babies may stop crying the minute they pass gas only to start crying a few minutes later. This causes them to swallow more air until they pass gas again. The act of passing gas temporarily startles the infant and results in the brief cessation in crying. In this case the gas is the effect rather than the cause. This unfortunately is all too often the case!

With time new parents will be able to recognize all the different types of cries of their infants. The hunger cries are very different than those of gas, pain, or illness. If your child is crying nonstop for greater than 3 hours and this cannot be stopped by feeding, rocking, or swaddling, then it is important to take the temperature and contact me for further advice.