



**Surviving  
Crying**

## HEALTH CHECKLIST

Things to check to make sure your baby is not unwell.

**In most cases, long bouts of crying are not as a result of a baby being ill.**

However, it is important to check and reassure yourself that there really is nothing wrong. These are some of the things to look for:

### **SIGNS OF FEVER**

Colds and minor infections are common and may make your baby irritable. Check your baby's temperature. The NHS recommends using a digital thermometer touching the skin under your baby's armpit (not through clothes): see: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children/>  
A normal temperature is about 36.4C (97.5F) but this differs slightly from baby to baby. Over 38C (100.4F) is usually considered a fever.

### **FOOD INTOLERANCE**

This is unlikely – only about 1% of babies cry a lot because they cannot tolerate cow's milk or other foods. But this can affect breast-fed babies as well as formula-fed ones. The following things might be signs that your baby has a food intolerance:

- Baby is not gaining weight.
- Vomiting more than twice a day for several days. Bringing up a little feed is normal and should not worry you.
- Persistent diarrhoea. Passing watery, unformed poo every day for more than a few days.
- Persistent constipation. Babies vary a lot in how often they poo. The normal range is from several times a day to less than once a week. This makes it hard to know whether a baby is constipated. Please contact your Health Visitor or GP if you are worried about this.

### **YOUR BABY'S GUT BACTERIA**

Giving probiotic 'friendly bacteria' 'lactobacillus reuterii' to babies who cry a lot has reduced their crying in some, but not other, studies (see our News & Research pages for details). Currently, this evidence remains controversial and adding these bacteria to young babies' diets is not recommended in the UK by NICE\*. As well as concern about infant safety, parents need to keep in mind that infant crying usually declines by 3-4 months of age without any treatment. Parents considering this treatment should always approach their GP for advice before starting and to monitor their baby's progress while using it.

### **REFLUX , GOR and GORD**

Gastro-oesophageal reflux (GOR) is the passage of gastric contents into the oesophagus. The term 'GORD' is used where GOR is prolonged and serious enough to become a disease. As noted above, bringing up some feed is normal in infants and several studies have shown that anti-reflux medications do not reduce infant crying. Parents with concerns about reflux should contact their GP.

### **OTHER ILLNESSES OR PHYSICAL DISORDERS**

Physical disorders that can cause a baby to cry a lot without a fever do occur, but they are very rare. The NICE\* website provides guidance for NHS professionals on symptoms which can help them to identify these rare cases: see <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/colic-infantile/> **Keep in Mind**, though,



that medical training is needed to interpret this complex information. If you are worried that your baby is unwell, always ask your Health Visitor or GP for guidance.

### **CRYING THAT SOUNDS EXTREMELY HIGH PITCHED**

This has been linked to physical disorders in babies by a small number of studies.

### **PROLONGED CRYING THAT OCCURS IN INFANTS WHO ARE 5 MONTHS OF AGE OR OLDER**

This may be a sign that something more serious is wrong.

\*The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) which advises the UK government on medical treatments.

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED?**

If you think your baby is ill, where the baby is showing sign of fever, is failing to gain weight or showing other symptoms listed above, you should seek help from your Health Visitor or GP.

Where a baby does not show these symptoms, is under 5 months of age, and shows the signs of colic listed in **Is it Colic?**, you can feel reassured your baby is probably in good health.

## **Myth: “If my baby is crying, there must be something wrong”**

**Fact: Actually, babies cry for lots of reasons and sometimes for no obvious reason.**

The average English baby cries and fusses for over 2 hours a day at around 5 weeks of age. Some cry more than this, some less. Research suggests there is nothing wrong with most babies crying a lot at this age. In fact only 5 to 10% of babies taken to the doctor because of their crying are poorly. It is just what normal babies do.

### **Copyright and Disclaimers**

The materials contained here are copyright and experimental and are being evaluated as part of this research. They must not be copied or disseminated outside this study. Every attempt has been made to ensure the information and guidance included in this website is accurate and based on reliable scientific evidence. However, the Surviving Crying Study team and the study sponsors and funders shall not be responsible or liable for any loss, injury or damage caused to any person or property arising in any way from the use of this website/booklet. The information provided in this website/booklet does not constitute clinical or legal advice and should not be relied on as such. You should continue to seek medical advice from your Health Visitor, GP or other health professional as you feel necessary. The material in this website/booklet is property of Surviving Crying Study and should not be reproduced in anyway without prior permission.

For further information on our policies including information on copyright and data protection please contact us using [survivingcrying@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:survivingcrying@leicester.ac.uk)

This study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Health Technology Assessment programme (HTA) (Unique award identifier 131341). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

