



# WHEN YOUR BABY (UNDER 4 MONTHS) CRIES

For ease of reading the female gender has been used throughout this brochure.

The following information provides a brief guide to some of the reasons that babies may cry and gives you some suggestions you might find helpful.

When your baby cries it is her way of communicating with you. It can be overwhelming when you do not know what she wants. Offers of advice may come from everywhere and can be conflicting, for example: 'let her cry', 'don't spoil the child', 'don't pick her up, a good cry will do her good' and 'she must be hungry'.

Listed below are some things you might need to consider if you are not sure why your baby is crying.



Newborn babies may cry up to 2 hours each day. This unsettled period is often around the same time each day, usually in the afternoon. This is common. Some reasons for crying include:

- Having a wet or dirty nappy.
- Feeling discomfort.
- Being too hot or cold.
- Needing to be feed, cuddled or wrapped.
- Needing some quiet time.
- Being tired and needing to sleep.

When you are thinking what to do next, consider what you have tried previously in your baby's routine that has worked.

A newborn will wake for approximately 1 hour and sleep for 2-3 hours. In this wake time she needs feeding and time talking to or playing with you. Finally she needs some quiet time to wind down, ready for sleep.

A breastfed baby may be hungry every 2-3 hours, bottle fed babies every 3-4 hours. Newborns may have 6-8 wet nappies and she may soil her nappy 3-4 times per day. Whether you change your baby's nappy before or after a feed is your choice – there is no evidence to suggest that either way is better.

Some babies swallow air when they feed which can cause discomfort. This is often helped by supporting them in an upright position. Sitting on your knee or leaning over your shoulder may help.



Many babies like the feeling of security by being wrapped. Babies have a reflex called the 'Moro reflex'. A sudden noise or movement can cause them to throw their arms out in fright or waken, then cry. Wrapping reduces this effect.

Your baby may like to suck between feeds. A common cause of crying is that the dummy/pacifier has fallen out of her mouth during sleep. When she returns to a light sleep she will want to suck again.

In the hotter part of the year, or if your infant is overdressed, she may easily become overheated. Using a light cotton wrap (available from Karitane on (02) 9794 1800) will help prevent overheating. No other bedding may be necessary. Dress your baby according to the weather – she will need to be dressed similarly to you.

In cooler weather, a cotton sheet or blanket may be needed and can be used to tuck your baby in. Once she become more mobile, about 4-5 months, she may no longer like to be wrapped.

If you have tried all of the above and you still cannot settle her and feel frustrated or that you may harm her, put her safely in her cot. Phone your partner, a friend, another family member (or a helpline) and ask for help.



If you require help please consult:

- Child & Family health Nurse
- General Practitioner
- Karitane Careline on 1300 CARING (1300 227 464)  
(TTY (02) 9794 1848 for hearing impaired)

Web: [www.karitane.com.au](http://www.karitane.com.au)

E-mail: [Karitane.online@sswahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Karitane.online@sswahs.nsw.gov.au)

(This email address should be used for non-urgent queries only)

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