

# Quick Crying Solutions

by Heather Ward, CD(DONA), PD, CCE, CLE

There is no sure way to calm a crying baby. There are however countless methods that parents have tried, all with some success. Try them over and over again, sometimes they may not work one day, yet will work on another. Often times they will work best in combination of each other.

Methods that work the best tend to include being close to a caring caregiver, gentle touch, rhythmic motion, soothing sounds and distraction.

Here are some ideas to try!

**Baby Carrier-** Babies love to be close to their parents; they also love seeing and hearing about what you are doing. Babies under 3 months benefit facing toward their parents chests, while 4 months and older often enjoy the entertainment and view of facing outward.

“Infant development researchers who study baby care practices in America and other cultures are unanimous in reporting: infants who are carried more cry less. In fact, research has shown that babies who are carried at least three hours a day cry forty percent less than infants who aren't carried as much.” Dr Sears Even if the closeness of your body fails to quiet baby, the carrier frees arms and lets you go anywhere without feeling you're neglecting your fussy baby. *Never work near or carry hot or dangerous things while your baby is in your arms or baby carrier.*

**Touch-** Simply holding your baby or gently stroking baby's head can sometimes be enough to stop the crying. Placing baby tummy down and across your lap and gently rubbing the upper back can ease crying.

Infant massage involves stroking your baby in a continuous, flowing movement from head to foot and is shown to increase circulation, digestion, release of relaxation hormones, and decrease of overall crying. Gentle touch is also proven to strengthen the immune system and increase mental and emotional intelligence.

**Swaddling-** Wrap your baby snugly (not tightly) in a lightweight blanket to make them feel secure. This will also inhibit the Moro reflex- when baby is startled, they fling their arms out and back. This involuntary movement can itself upset a colicky baby and bring on crying. Swaddling works best in the first few months- after that most babies are starting to explore their world and may not like to feel restricted.

**Rhythmic Motion or Dancing-** Start gently swaying the baby any way you can. This technique is most effective in someone's arms. Some suggestions would be to: hold baby in your lap while you sit in a rocking chair, hold baby to your chest while bouncing gently on an exercise ball, walk around with baby in a baby carrier, try a walk in a stroller, try a bouncy seat, or take baby for a car ride strapped in their car seat.

**Sucking-** Offer a breast, bottle, pacifier or a clean finger to suck on in combination with other methods. Babies have a strong reflex to suck and it is proven to help stimulate calming and relaxation reflexes as well.

**Talking, Reading Books and Singing-** Babies love to hear their parents talk and sing to them. Babies especially love repetitive and rhyming sounds. Songs, finger plays, poems, and rhyme/ sing-song books all are great entertainment. If you are busy doing other things, talk to baby and describe to them what you are doing. It doesn't matter if you can't carry a tune, it's your voice

they love and recognize!

**Music, Rhythmic or White Noise Sounds-** Many babies enjoy classical music, sounds of nature like waterfalls, ocean waves, rain falling, or recording of the inside of the womb. Sounds of a running fan, radio set to static, and the sound of a bubbling fish tank often works as well.

**Baby Play-** Smiling and making faces at baby can sometimes distract them into play. Look at these handouts- Activities for Infants under Baby Care Class or the handouts under Child Development for ideas for baby games to play.

**Mirrors-** Unbreakable reflective surfaces, such as those that appear on many baby toys, can often capture and hold a fussy baby's attention.

**Warm Bath-** This will depend on whether or not your baby usually becomes more relaxed after warm a bath. Many babies will benefit from a few drops of lavender essential oil in the bath water to stimulate calmness and relaxation. Heavily scented or artificially scented soaps, bubbles, oils and lotions can easily cause more crying.

**Change of scenery-** Sometimes drastically changing baby's location can stop the crying. Take baby (in proper clothing for weather) outside, especially works at night when the air is cool. Try taking a ride in the car, going to the grocery store- where the lights and action are a good distraction, or anywhere that is away from the house to a new environment. This often helps the parents too!

**Change in Diet-** Food sensitivity sometimes can cause crying and could indicate an allergy. Breastfeeding mothers can try eliminating from their diets caffeine, milk products, spicy foods, and gas-producing foods, such as cabbage; properties of these foods can "travel" through breastmilk and cause baby to cry. Bottlefeeding parents should ask the pediatrician about switching to a different formula.