

TROUBLESHOOTER'S GUIDE TO CRYING BABIES

It is the middle of the night, 1 hour after his last feeding, and he has been crying for 10 minutes for no apparent reason. Mom is exhausted and may lose it. You have to go to work early.

It is time to earn your spurs, Dad. Think troubleshooter's guide. A practical, proactive approach is in order. This guide employs the same approach used in fixing cars, computers, or other mechanical items. **What do you do?**

- To figure out the cause of his crying, develop a mental list of why your baby cries. "Hungry" is at the top of the list, followed by tired. All lists will be as different, but think gas, wet diaper, rash, constipation, hot, cold, just wants to be held, or burped—and add new issues as they develop.
- Keep trying solutions like you do when troubleshooting a car that will not start. Go through the whole checklist. As long as you are actively trying things, you will decrease anxiety and frustration, which tend to upset babies. **Keep checking.** The new nipple on his bottle may not have a hole or a sharp edge of the tape on his diaper may be poking him.
- When you have tried everything and nothing worked, go back to the second item on the list—tired. After 30 minutes of crying, your baby is going to be overtired, and putting her to sleep will be hard.

Of course, if at any point you suspect your baby may need medical attention, call a doctor. This advice comes from pediatricians, who say you should be on the safe side. Check your resources for indications.

Here are some tips for calming crying babies from veteran dads:

- Do not take the crying personally.
- Go for a walk. Babies often love the motion of a stroller or riding in a backpack, pouch, or sling.
- A taut tummy or kicking legs may indicate gas pain. Bicycle her legs, gently rub her tummy, or lay him across your lap with one leg under his tummy and pat his back.
- Try tag team parenting with mom. Taking turns is much better than both of you up all night together.
- Give mom a break and do not have her pop the baby on her breast every time he whimpers. Develop alternate techniques.
- Invest in a baby swing.
- Once you get her to sleep, use a heating pad to warm her bedding (remove before putting baby in crib) so the shock of cold sheets does not wake her up.
- Rhythmic motion and background noise also help lull babies to sleep. Try the vacuum, car rides, music at a low volume, or the washer or dryer.

There may be times when walking your crying baby for hours is the only alternative. Babies can be tough, some much more than others. Even the worst cases of colic will pass, and, while the memories of the tough times may never be fond, a dad will always know that he was there when he was needed. This feeling is the basis for a very strong relationship as one's child grows. Hang in there.