

baby NEWS

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Capital District
Child Care Council

When Babies Cry

Babies, like adults, cry for a multitude of reasons. Because babies don't have the ability to express themselves with language, they use crying to communicate their needs. Infants may cry when experiencing a physical need such as hunger, the need for sleep, or the need to be changed. Babies also cry when they are scared, insecure, angry, or in need of attention. Whatever the reason may be, babies cry to let their caregiver know that they need something. How caregivers respond to a crying baby has a large impact on how much time the baby spends crying.

Research indicates that ignoring baby's cries or reacting negatively to them when fussing can confuse very young babies and delay attachment. Instinctively, babies crave the close presence of their caregivers. Studies encourage caregivers to respond immediately and consistently when a baby begins to cry. Some people feel that giving too much attention to a "hard-to-settle" baby will encourage crying. We now know that the more a baby is held and carried, the less likely she is to cry and fuss. Though a baby may stop crying when left alone, this does not necessarily mean she is content.

It is up to the caregiver to interpret the difference between

a baby's cries and choose when and how to respond. It is important for caregivers to support babies by giving them the tools they need to learn self regulation.

Responsive care givers can help fussy babies learn to self regulate by supporting them as they organize their social, emotional, and physical feelings. When a caregiver senses that a baby is about to cry, she can offer her favorite "loveys." She can move closer to her and coo to her in a calm voice about what she may be experiencing or feeling. "Are you scared in this new room? Let's take a look and see what's in here. I see a ball over in the corner."



Quickly and consistently answering a baby's cry helps her learn to trust her world

Crying is a necessary part of every baby's life. The adult responsibility is to emotionally support the crying baby, not just get her to stop. Babies who feel safe during their infancy will grow into adults who build strong relationships, have self-esteem, and an understanding of how to answer their own baby's cries.

Adapted from: "Cry It Out: The Potential Dangers of Leaving Your Baby to Cry" by Margaret Chuong-Kim

