

# Baby needs you.



Since baby cannot do anything without help, baby relies on you when something is needed.

Since baby cannot speak or gesture, the only way baby can let you know something is needed – a diaper change, food, warmth, sleep – is to cry. So it's a good thing that baby cries. He or she feels a need and is telling you in the only possible way.

There are some important things to remember when trying to soothe a crying baby.

## DHS is

responsible for providing and administering publicly funded human services to Allegheny County residents.

## DHS Principles

All services will be:

- High quality, comprehensive and accessible.
- Individualized and designed to be respectful of the unique cultural characteristics of each individual and/or community.
- Integrated and offered through a team approach that recognizes the capacity of individuals and families to identify their own strengths, needs and goals; create relationships and natural supports; and take steps necessary to accomplish these goals.



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Produced by the Office of Community Relations, 10/2016



## Soothing a crying baby

you can do it ... safely



## Never shake baby

A crying baby can test the patience of even the most loving caregiver.

If you are unable to meet baby's needs, call someone you trust for help.

Do **not** take out your frustration on baby. Do **not** shake baby.

Shaking babies under the age of two years can cause irreversible brain damage and even death.

If you are not able to get someone to help right away, place baby on his or her back in an empty crib or pack-n-play while you unwind and calm down.

**Remember**, baby's crying is not meant to bother you. It is meant to let you know baby needs your help.

## Why baby cries

If baby is crying, make sure all of his or her basic needs are met.

- Is baby wearing a wet or soiled diaper? A simple diaper change can stop skin irritation.
- Is baby hungry? Did baby burp after the most recent feeding? Hunger and a bubble of air in the belly are two common things that can cause pain and cause baby to cry.

- Is baby too hot or too cold? Kiss baby's forehead. If the temperature is different from yours, consider adding to or removing some of baby's clothing.
- Is baby tired or over-stimulated? Just like most of us, babies get cranky when they need sleep.

If baby has a fresh diaper, has been fed and burped, and is dressed appropriately, sleep might be all that is needed.

## Ways to encourage sleep

Sleep is more likely when baby feels relaxed. There are several common ways to help baby relax.

- Gentle swaying in a rocking chair, swing or your arms
- Offering baby a clean, dry pacifier
  - Baby should not be forced to use a pacifier.
  - Never put a string on a pacifier.
- Snug, but not tight, swaddling
  - Swaddling should not be used after baby is able to undo the wrapping.
- Smooth rolling, either in a car or stroller
  - Remember to always place baby in an approved car seat when in a car.
- Soft music, singing or calming sounds

## Safe Sleep for Baby

The safest position for baby to sleep is on his or her back **every time**.

The safest sleep clothing for baby is one-piece (footed) pajamas.

The safest place for baby to sleep is alone in an empty crib, pack-and-play or bassinet with the mattress covered by a tight, fitted sheet.

Learn more about safe sleep at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/safesleep](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/safesleep)

## If crying doesn't stop

Consult with your medical provider to see if baby is crying from a medical problem.

Long periods of crying can mean baby is in pain. Common conditions like intestinal trouble, milk allergies and ear infections can cause pain.

Colic can also cause pain and is common in infants under four months of age. During a colicky period, you may notice baby pull his or her knees to the belly or cry in a different, piercing way. Colic can go on for several hours. When baby is not colicky, feeding, playing and sleeping are normal.

If you have tried everything, and the crying continues, it is fine to place baby in a safe place, such as a crib or pack-n-play, and walk out of the room to take a break. Baby will not be harmed and you can avoid taking your frustration out on baby.

You can watch a helpful review video at [www.babycries.org/](http://www.babycries.org/).