

Colic, Crying, and the Period of PURPLE Crying

A baby's first cry after birth is often a sound of relief to parents. This first cry, which clears fluid from the baby's lungs, is the beginning of normal period of infant crying. Crying time increases around 2 weeks of age, and typically peaks at 6-8 weeks before it begins to taper off at 3-4 months. Most excessive crying stops around 3 months of age. It is important to understand that all babies cry, and infantile crying is to be expected in the first few months of life. The frequency of crying varies from baby to baby, however it is not uncommon for some babies to cry significantly more than others, which some pediatricians would describe using the term colic.



Colic is traditionally defined using *Wessel's Rule of Threes*, which diagnoses colic for infants who cry more than three hours a day, at least three days a week, for more than 3 consecutive weeks.

Purple is an acronym that can be used as a guideline for normal patterns of infant crying, which describes common crying behaviors in infants. **PURPLE** stands for **Peak**, **Unpredictability**, **Resistant**, **Pain**, **Long** periods, and **Evening**.

The Letters in **PURPLE** Stand for

P	U	R	P	L	E
PEAK OF CRYING	UNEXPECTED	RESISTS SOOTHING	PAIN-LIKE FACE	LONG LASTING	EVENING
Your baby may cry more each week. The most at 2 months, then less at 3-5 months	Crying can come and go and you don't know why	Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try	A crying baby may look like they are in pain, even when they are not	Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more	Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening

Ways to soothe a "colicky" baby

- Rocking
- Holding
- Walking outside
- Taking a stroller ride
- Taking a car ride
- Running a faucet of water for white noise
- Changing your baby's position
- Putting baby down for a break in their crib

The most important thing to do for a fussy infant is to find ways for you to soothe your baby. But know that you won't always be successful. If your baby has been fed, burped, changed, is warm and comfortably dressed and they're still crying, don't spend all of your energy determining the why behind their cry. Unfortunately, you likely won't find the answer! Rather, spend time figuring out what helps.

3 Step Action plan for helping a fussy infant

- Walk, talk, comfort, and take the baby outside where crying isn't so loud and you can get fresh air and space.
- Walk away-it's okay to remove yourself from the situation for a small period of time. Leave the baby on their back in the bassinet or crib, relax, walk outside, or sit on your porch. You will return with more energy.
- Never shake, harm, or hit a baby. You can't give your baby too much gentle comforting, holding, and soothing.

If your baby seems to follow the PURPLE period, spend your time and energy to put plans in place rather than figuring out what makes your baby cry—you won't. Use your time to find new ways of soothing, supports for you and your spouse, getting evening help from friends and family, and care for yourself. For more information, visit www.purplecrying.info

Resource: Seattle Children's Hospital