

what's cutie

Every sob has a story. Use our month-by-month guide to understand what your infant

As sure as the sun will rise, your baby will bawl. From day one of becoming a mom, it's your job to translate your peanut's *waaahs* to English. As you decipher which wail signals which want, it helps to know that crying, like most behavior, changes over time. Once you learn what causes the tears, you'll become adept at calming her down.

0 to 3 Months

Listen up!

Why they cry It's your newborn's sole method of telling you something's wrong in Baby Town. The usual suspects are hunger, sleepiness, a wet or dirty diaper, or being too hot or too cold, says Tanya Remer Altmann, M.D., a pediatrician in Los Angeles and author of *Mommy Calls*. Or he may be upset because he craves the stimulation of being in utero. "Newborns miss the rhythmic energy of the womb, the movement, the muffled noises, and the limited space," says Harvey Karp, M.D., *American Baby* advisory board member and creator of *The Happiest Baby on the Block* book and DVD. The adjustment to the real world can be rocky: During the first few months, 43 percent of infants will cry for up to two hours a day, 29 percent will holler for up to three hours, and another 14 percent can wail for up to four hours, British research reveals. Evening—the so-called "witching hour"—is pitch-a-fit time for babies younger than 9 months, and even the pros aren't sure why. Some believe the day's activities and frustrations

crying about?

is trying to get across and how you can restore peace, quiet, and smiles for both of you.

wear on newborns, while others say babies tend to cry at this hour to tucker themselves out so they can snooze. How to know if your infant is colicky? Although Dr. Karp maintains there's no such thing, other experts call it colic if an otherwise healthy baby meets the Rule of Threes: more than three hours of crying per day, three days a week, for more than three weeks. **What to do** Run through the list of possibilities (hungry, tired, hot, cold, in need of a diaper change) to try to hit on the problem and resolve it. With time, you'll get better at recognizing your cutie's cues and patterns—you may even predict when she's due to eat, doze, or get a fresh diaper before her first whimper.

When the cause isn't clear, turn to Dr. Karp's "5 S's": *swaddling*, holding Baby on his *side* or *stomach*, *swinging* (or *swaying*) him in your arms, making *shushing* sounds in his ear, and offering something to *suck*, such as the breast, pacifier, or your pinky. (Watch a video of how to do each of the 5 S's at americanbaby.com/Karp.) Try each "S" until Mr. Grumpypants calms down or you're doing all five at once. Don't worry about spoiling him. "When you respond to your baby, he learns to trust you," says Dr. Karp. "This helps him later develop independence."

If you're at wit's end and need a breather, it's okay to put your little howler in a safe place (the crib works) and take a moment to compose yourself, says Wendy Sue Swanson, M.D., a pediatrician in Seattle. Trust your new-mama instincts too: If your

newborn's bawling seems unusual or simply out of character, check for a fever and then call your doc either way, says Dr. Swanson.

3 to 6 Months A friend in need

Why they cry In those first weeks, weeping is more instinctual; now babies begin to realize crying can make things happen for them (and they're not shy about putting that newfound power to use). Another tearjerker is frustration. As a child becomes more aware of her surroundings, she may let out a squall if she can't reach her beloved Binky or get out of tummy time by flipping over. What's more, the airplane mobile that once mesmerized her is now boorring.

At this stage, the bond with you (and other caregivers) becomes even more key; you're far more stimulating than any toy, says Dr. Karp. Baby usually prefers your face to an unfamiliar one and responds more readily to your smile than to a stranger's. This can also mean he's likelier to request your presence (loudly!) at night too. News that will bring you tears of joy: Crying usually drops off drastically during this phase, especially for infants who were colicky, says Dr. Altmann.

What to do To guard against boredom, get out together at least once a day, either bundled up for a walk or on an errand, and chat your baby up. Point out the roaring sound of trucks and the yellow bananas at the grocery store. Spend ample time face to face; your infant craves your voice and your

gaze, says Dr. Karp. During this stage, you're also probably moving toward sleep training, ideal because your munchkin is able to snooze for longer stretches. Plus, if you're headed back to work soon, you'll need your shut-eye more than ever. If your cutie cries in the night, try not to pick her up. Instead, go to her with a quick caress and a calming phrase, such as "Sleep, sleep; Mommy loves you." That way, she knows you're there but will learn to soothe herself.

6 to 9 Months Play day

Why they cry Now that your tot uses his hands to tinker with toys, sits up on his own, and possibly scoots around, he's gung-ho about putting his skills to use. When babies don't get enough playtime or become upset by limits, they can make it ear-piercingly clear. Separation and stranger anxiety also crop up now as babes become better at distinguishing the familiar from the unfamiliar, says Dr. Swanson (cue the awkward exchanges with Great-Aunt Peggy). Finally, as teeth begin to cut through tender gums, some babies will express discomfort. Hang in there: The worst soreness usually lasts only a few days.

What to do Distract! Shifting the focus works wonders at this stage, since Baby may not realize the forbidden object (your dinner knife!) exists when it's out of sight. This concept is known as object permanence, and she'll get a handle on it soon. When you have visitors, greet them with a warm welcome, even a big hug, so Baby knows she's safe. Ask friends and

family to give her time to warm up; not every kid can schmooze right away.

As for sore gums, ease pain with a wet washcloth cooled in the fridge, teething toys, and, if necessary and doc-approved, a dose of Tylenol at bedtime to help her sleep.

9 to 12 Months

Near and far

Why they cry After all these months, you're a pro at discerning whether Baby's sobs mean "feed me" or "hold me!" But there's a new reason for his yammering: He may sense you're out of sorts. Your little one is attuned to your feelings at this age, and your expressions can affect him. "When you smile, he smiles," says Dr. Karp. "When you're scared or angry, he can feel overwhelmed and cry."

Your toddler-in-training is also on a quest for independence, so prepare for backlash when you stop him from running off or climbing, explains Dr. Altmann. Without real words, the best he can do is point or move toward an object—and hope you'll understand. Diaper-change wrestling matches can also spike at this age; busy little bodies hate to be confined and want to be boss—if only for a minute.

What to do If Baby seems to be reacting to your dip in mood, take a few deep

The growth of Baby's brain and body outpaces his ability to talk, a lag that can result in meltdowns.

breaths and try to start fresh, says Dr. Karp. If a squirmy tot wants to explore the stairs, relocating her to a safer spot still works, says Dr. Karp. Your peanut may also feel more in control if you teach her baby signs, such as those for "more," "milk," and "all done." (Get the hang of them with our video primer at americanbaby.com/sign.) For dicey diaper changes, offer a toy used only during that time, and put her on the floor if the changing table becomes too precarious.

12 to 18 Months

No bounds

Why they cry He wants to explore! At this age, toddlers are on the move, into everything, and don't take kindly to limits, says Dr. Karp. The growth of your baby's brain and body outpaces his ability to speak, a lag that can result in meltdowns. Tots are not only miffed that you're setting boundaries but also peeved they can't physically do everything they want, says Dr. Karp.

Another factor: If your munchkin's social calendar is filling with gym classes and playdates, naptime may

get lost in the mix, and an overtired child can turn wild and weepy. A pared-down schedule may be better. Finally, don't be surprised if Sweetie abruptly sours on the babysitter. "Separation anxiety can pop up again during this phase," says Dr. Swanson. Your child is thrilled to assert herself in the world, but doing so reminds her she is separate from you. Reassure her you'll return, as you always do.

What to do To cut down on the number of times you say "no," make your home a safe haven. Remove sharp objects and choking hazards, secure bookcases and other furniture to the wall, and put locks on cabinets and drawers at Baby's level. If being confined to the car seat triggers screams, turn it into a more hospitable spot with board books, and "heap on praise when your tot behaves well, since toddlers crave your approval," says Dr. Altmann.

Stick to the nap schedule as best you can, even if you have to dash out of a party early. You'll ensure your lovebug has the energy to handle the ups and downs each day brings, and that's something to smile about! ●

mom-to-mom moments

Feed me! I'm ready to nap! Change my diaper! We asked our Facebook fans for the clues they use to decode those tears.

My baby fusses for a nap, and cries and hollers for food.

TABATHA JEAN BODIFORD

Always check the diaper. That's usually the first thing that needs to be done.

COLLEEN LAYTON MARTINEAU

My son is almost 6 months old and before a nap or bedtime, he has a specific exhausted cry. I know he's going to fall right to sleep.

ALYSSA KARANT

Don't panic. Babies have to cry to get your attention if they're hungry, cold, or upset.

VAL LEE

No 'aha' moment, but my fiancé and I pay attention to what we do that works, like feeding her and changing her, to stop her cries.

MELINDA FOX



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