

# Simple Secrets for Settling Babies

*Your questions answered*

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Settled Babies, Settled Parents



## Introduction



Parents of a young baby face a number of contradictions. They can be overwhelmed by a sense of joy and love, and at the same time be burdened by sleeplessness and anxiety when their baby is unsettled. Excitement may at times give way to exhaustion and a sense of helplessness.

Much is written and known about the sense of joyous love. Much less about the exhaustion and frustration parents may experience.

By addressing these issues, albeit briefly, this booklet aims to inform parents, validate the way they feel during these challenging times and provide some insights into the secrets for settling babies.

As parents you will be confronted with lots of conflicting advice regarding feeding, settling and bringing up your child. Above all this 'noise', you need to trust your own intuition; your heart; your gut feelings. There is only one strict rule in child rearing, and that is that **there is no strict rule.**

Be yourself; trust yourself. Value your own instinctive way of relating to your baby, and the rest is fairly simple. Doubts along the way will come and go, and go to come again, but be confident that you know best.

This booklet contains a set of guide posts to help you on your own special journey.

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## How common are crying and sleep problems?

**Very common.** Two of the most common problems for which parents seek advice from health care professionals are persistent crying and sleep difficulties.

Let me assure you that difficult, unsettled babies are the norm. You are not alone when your baby cries and fusses for no obvious reason.

## How much crying is excessive?

**Crying is normal.** Excessive crying is defined as greater than 3 hours each day and more than 3 days a week. However, many parents would define it with lesser amounts, which is quite reasonable.

Complex factors such as babies' innate temperament, individual adjustment to the transition from the womb and learned behaviours all *interplay* with the *cause* of the crying.

Crying is almost never due to something the parents are doing *wrong*. Some babies simply cry more than others, and in most

cases crying can be expected to be worse in the late afternoon or evening.

If you think your baby cries too much, seek advice from your Paediatrician or health professional. Keep a record of *each hour*, day and night, for a couple of days if you are unsure. Such a diary helps gain a clearer perspective on the amount your baby cries.

Sleep Record templates can be downloaded free from [www.okidokiebaby.com](http://www.okidokiebaby.com)

## Why has my baby become more unsettled?

**Babies gradually become more fussy over the first weeks of life.** Crying and general irritability peak at 6-8 weeks. Even though excessive fussiness may then resolve over the next few months, sleep issues can become a growing problem.



## Why do babies cry?

**Crying is normal.** Crying is a means of communication, expression and getting rid of pent up energy or tension. As babies get older, they learn to verbalise (use baby language and words), to play and become more physically active. These developments reduce the periods of crying.

Your baby may cry for an obvious reason like hunger, a dirty diaper, feeling hot or cold. Your baby may be unwell. **Irritable babies first need to be assessed by a health professional to rule out an underlying physical cause.**

The following may cause excessive infant crying:

- Cow's Milk Protein Allergy
- Reflux (gastro-esophageal reflux)
- Urinary tract Infection
- Insufficient Caloric intake
- Thrush or ear infection
- A myriad of other but less common causes

In my view easily the most common identifiable cause of infant irritability/colic/unsettled behaviour is Cow's Milk Protein Allergy (CMPA). **Continue to breastfeed if possible** and eliminate all dairy products from the mother's diet for 7 days trial. If bottle fed, a trial of hypoallergenic formula for 7 days week can help reach a diagnosis and help your baby/family.

Infants will generally grow out of milk allergy in the first year or two of life. See your health professional to discuss these trials, and how to replace maternal calcium, and also when and how to rechallenge your baby with cow's milk based formulas.

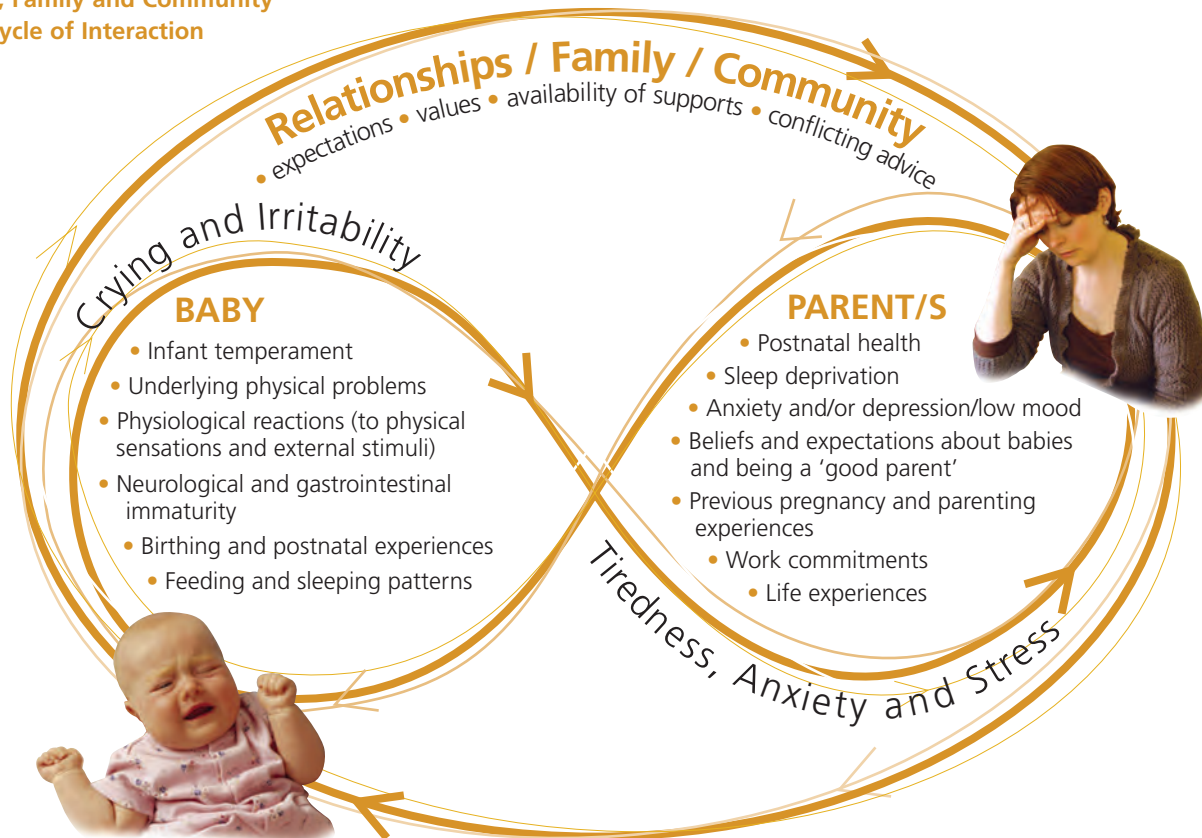
### You may never know why your baby cries a lot.

Normal healthy babies with the best, most wonderful parents can cry persistently. A baby that cries a lot may just be demonstrating a fussy temperament during a phase of development.

Fussy and irritable baby behaviours can have a harsh impact on moms and dads. Parents can become sleep deprived themselves. In turn, they can feel irritable, have low moods and be overwhelmed by a sense of frustration and self doubt.

There are many factors that may contribute to persistent crying problems. It is possible that a cycle of *crying and irritability*, along with *tiredness, anxiety and stress*, may develop. Try to be aware of this *cycle of interaction* to keep everything in perspective:

## Baby, Family and Community - A Cycle of Interaction





## How much sleep does my baby need?

**Babies have individual needs.** Even siblings with the same parents in the same house may have very different needs. It is the same for sleep.

There is a range of expected sleep needs, but there are no hard and fast rules. As you spend more time with your baby, you will understand more about your baby's sleep needs, cues and patterns. Just try to establish a routine for regular settling behaviours.

- A newborn baby, in the first 2-3 weeks, will generally require 16 - 20 hours per 24 hour period. Feeding and sleeping are more predictable at this early age, but after 2 - 3 weeks things usually get tougher.

- After 3 weeks parents often find their baby sleeps less (approximately 16 - 18 hours) and cries more.
- 6 weeks may see your baby sleep around 15 - 16 hours each day.
- By 4 months babies may sleep 5 - 10 hours plus 2 naps of 2 - 3 hours each.
- A baby of 6 - 7 months can sleep through without an overnight feed, giving you anywhere from 6 - 12 hours, plus morning (1 - 2 hours) and afternoon (1 - 2 hours) naps.
- By 9 months the average sleep can be 11 - 12 hours overnight plus 2 naps, and by 12 months babies may sleep 12 hours with 2 daytime naps that may be shortening.

## Is it OK to feed my baby to sleep?

**If that is what you want to do.** However, keep in mind that feeding your baby to sleep will become the expected routine for your baby. It is reasonable in the first few weeks, but babies learn behaviours at a very young age and the sooner you can adopt a *FEED, PLAY, SLEEP* routine, the less stress on everybody.

Newborn babies mostly feed and sleep. However by the age of two or three weeks your baby will need periods of play, stimulation and interaction.

From a few weeks of age your baby can begin to follow a *FEED, PLAY, SLEEP* routine. This means feeding your baby and allowing some playtime before going to sleep. Try to have a play with your baby after feeds, before sleep time. Play, smile, interact and then place in the crib **still awake**. For your newborn, 'play' may simply be lying under the play gym, or being held and talked to - and it may only be for ten minutes. It is important to allow your baby increasing amounts of wakeful, interactive play time following each feed so that when put to bed your baby will go to sleep because of tiredness and not just because of a full tummy.

Falling asleep in the crib helps establish self-soothing behaviours which are important in settling and sleeping for older babies. Repetitive, rhythmic sounds in the baby's room can help as well.

Routine incorporating *FEED, PLAY, SLEEP* is vital for regular settling patterns.

Babies quickly learn to associate one thing with another and if your baby connects being fed with going to sleep, you will soon have a baby who cannot settle without a feed. Not so enjoyable at 3 am! If you include play in your baby's daytime routine not only will you be increasing learning and development, the physical activity helps reduce pent up energy.

As your baby grows, continue the *FEED, PLAY, SLEEP* routine and extend the amount of play. Perhaps your baby can enjoy happy kicking on the floor while watching moving trees and shapes through the window. Then when tired from play, your baby will be calm and ready for bed.

Another advantage of putting your baby in the crib awake, is that waking after the sleep in the same place is less confusing. The crib should be comfortably familiar.

## How do I know if my breastfed baby is getting enough milk?

**If you are changing 6 - 8 wet diapers each 24 hour period and your baby is gaining more than 150 grams/ 5 ozs every week, then your baby is probably getting enough milk.**

There is a lot of advice offered to mothers on this issue. Seek professional opinions from your Paediatrician or other health professionals. Lactation Consultants are available in most centres and have lots of valuable information and guidance to offer.

## When can I expect my baby to sleep through the night?

'Sleeping through' may only mean 5 - 6 hours straight overnight. You may be lucky enough to score 8 hours and everyone seems to know a 'fortunate family' whose baby sleeps 12 hours overnight.

A healthy, full term (not premature) baby of **6 - 7 months** can usually sleep through the night without a feed. If you have a baby older than this who is crying out at night, it is probably not due to hunger.

All babies wake up during the night. Some demand their parents' attention while others are able to soothe themselves back off to sleep without requiring Mom or Dad's presence. The difference between a 'good sleeper' and a 'bad sleeper' is that a 'good sleeper' can resettle themselves independently and **self-soothe**. Soundtracks such as **Sounds for Silence** can help your baby comfortably re-settle without your physical intervention.



## How can I help my baby sleep?

### Babies need to learn *how* and *when* to sleep.

Babies learn certain behaviours at a very early age. What is comfortable for you, your baby and your family's lifestyle is important. Establishing a routine and encouraging sleep patterns that are comfortable for you and your baby are vital for regular settling behaviours.

There are a number of simple measures you can use to soothe your crying baby. An easy to remember strategy is to:



- S = Security** *securely wrap* or **swaddle** your baby up to 4 - 6 months; use a **security object** for babies after 6 - 7 months.
- M = Movement** repetitive **movement** like rocking or patting; use a carry sling; a stroller ride or a drive in the car.
- S = Sounds** **Sounds for Silence** or other constant, low-frequency sound; avoid excessive quiet.

Remember quiet and stillness is NOT what your baby is used to. The womb is noisy, often on the move and is very tight without much room to move. Adopting the SMS Your Baby strategy helps babies settle and, can encourage self-soothing behaviours.

### Why Security?

Security in the young baby involves securely wrapping or swaddling. This helps your baby feel secure and safe. Sucking, which is a normal instinct, may help a young baby feel secure as well. Babies suck to survive, but also to soothe themselves. They

## How does sound help settle my baby?

Your baby is not used to being in a quiet environment. The womb was a very noisy place with fetal and maternal heartbeats, blood flow swooshes, bowel gurgles and muffled noises from outside the womb. After birth, the familiar and consistent rumble of the womb is replaced by different and inconsistent noises. For this reason sounds that remind your baby of the womb can be effective in settling. Low pitched sounds can soothe your baby not only because of their familiarity, but because of their ability to distract and engage.

often continue to suck even when they are not hungry, and this is why pacifiers can be useful for settling babies. It is important however to not allow a pacifier to become your baby's security object after 6 months of age. More information on pacifiers can be found in the **Sounds for Silence Baby Settling and Health Guide**.

Security becomes a new ball game after 6 months! Around 6 – 7 months you can encourage the establishment of a **security object** or *comfort item*. This can be a (washable) soft toy, muslin wrap or special blanket. Ensure you have a duplicate of the security object, that they are *not* unique in appearance; are easy to permeate with mommy's all important smells, and are easy to stuff in any carry bag for the next 5 or 6 years. For these reasons, using a muslin wrap (or 6!) gives you flexibility for frequent washing or replacement if lost.

At a time when there is so much information available, and when you are most likely to be tired and in need of support, remember to **SMS Your Baby...** the simple secrets for settling.

### Why Movement?

Movement and repetitive motion, such as patting your baby on the back in a rhythmic pattern, is soothing. Rocking with a baby in your arms is almost a reflex action for most of us. Stroller rides, especially over bumps and cracks, a car ride and time in a hammock are some different options. You do need to be fully available to move your baby, whereas your presence is not required once the baby is securely swaddled and exposed to sound.

### Why Sounds?

Sounds are consistently soothing for babies. If you can make sounds available to your baby that are rhythmic, constant, and comfortingly familiar (low frequency as in the fluid-filled environment of the womb), then your baby will be distracted from fussing or crying, engaged by the sounds and then will relax sufficiently to go to sleep. If the need for sleep is greater than the need for something else (like feeding), then your baby will usually settle with sounds.

**Sounds for Silence** soundtracks are repetitive, familiar, low-frequency sounds. They have been specifically developed to meet the settling needs of babies. They find these sounds reassuringly familiar. Babies can then be distracted from their crying or fussing, being engaged and soothed by the continuous sounds.



## Why don't lullabies work effectively to settle my baby?

Lullabies have their place and time... that is why **Sounds for Silence** has included 7 lullaby soundtracks. However, a crying baby is quite simply less distracted from the crying cycle by a gentle lullaby. Lullabies are useful once your baby is settled and asleep, but are not as useful to break the crying cycle.

Continuous, foreground sounds distract babies from their crying cycle and hold their attention until they are settled. Babies need

sounds that are rhythmic, repetitive and comfortingly familiar in order to settle.

Lullabies can be effective in helping a distractible baby to be more focused at times such as feeding, or as background music during baby massage. They are most suitable for older babies and toddlers, not necessarily for settling crying babies.

## Where can I get some help or more information about settling my baby?

The list here presents a very small sample of information out there for you. Support and information is readily available. However, if you are feeling overwhelmed by your baby's demands or your own needs, it is important to seek support and professional advice. Talk with a health professional such as a baby health centre nurse, your doctor or pharmacist.

Health professionals are skilled in assessing your baby and advising you, the parents. They, along with you and the knowledge you have of your own baby's needs, can offer support, help and advice.

- **Child Health Nurses**, Infant Health Centres or Plunket Nurse in your region or suburb

- **Parent Help Lines** – provide confidential telephone information, advice, guidance and referral service

Most are freecall / freephone numbers.

- › Australian Capital Territory – ParentLink 133 427
- › Northern Territory & Queensland– Parentline: 1300 301 300
- › New South Wales – Parent Line 1300 130 052
- › New South Wales – Karitane 24hr Careline 1300 227 464
- › Tresillian – NSW & ACT: metro (02) 9787 0855  
Country 1800 637 357
- › Tasmania – The Parenting Line: 1300 808 178
- › South Australia – Parents Help Line 1300 364 100
- › Victoria - Parentline (24hrs) 13 22 89
- › Victoria - Maternal & Child Health Line (24 hrs) 13 22 29
- › Tweddle Child & Family Health Service  
Melbourne (03) 9689 1577
- › Western Australia – Parenting Line (08) 6279 1200  
or freecall STD 1800 654 432

- **New Zealand** – National telephone assistance (7am to midnight) PlunketLine Freephone 0800 933 922
- **Lactation consultant** through your local health care agencies
- Your **family doctor or Paediatrician**
- **Pharmacist**
- **Sounds for Silence Baby Settling Program**

## Suggested Websites:

Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne:  
<http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/factsheets.cfm>

Children's Hospital at Westmead NSW:  
<http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/factsheets/cryj.htm>

Government health information websites:  
<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>  
[http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Sleep\\_and\\_your\\_baby?OpenDocument](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Sleep_and_your_baby?OpenDocument)  
<http://www.healthed.govt.nz/>

La Leche League International (breastfeeding):  
[www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org)

SIDS & Kids: <http://www.sidsandkids.org/faqs.html>

Family & Children's Services – New Zealand  
<http://www.plunket.org.nz/>

Family Health - New Zealand: [www.everybody.co.nz](http://www.everybody.co.nz)

Raising Children Network: <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

oKIDokie: [www.okidokiebaby.com](http://www.okidokiebaby.com)

Parentline (multilingual): [www.parentline.vic.gov.au](http://www.parentline.vic.gov.au)

Ballarat Paediatric Clinic:  
<http://www.ballaratpaediatricclinic.com.au/factsheets.htm>

What to do when your baby cries:  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-baby/PR00037>

Infant colic: <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Colic?OpenDocument>

Crying baby: <http://www.cyh.com.au/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=141&id=1829>

Milk allergy: [http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/allergies/milk\\_allergy.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/allergies/milk_allergy.html)

More milk allergy: <http://www.allergy.org.au/content/view/143/138/>



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## Disclaimer

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