Comforting Techniques for Your Baby

You cannot spoil your baby by holding him or her. The baby has listened to your heartbeat and voice throughout your pregnancy and needs continued closeness to feel secure. A baby who is crying even after being fed and changed is most likely asking for something. The key is to figure out what that “something” is. Here are some possible discomforts along with ways to calm your baby:

**Having a bowel movement**
It may help to give the baby the palm of your hand to push his feet against during the process.

**Air bubbles**
Try holding the baby on her stomach across your knees. Allow her head to rest on your arm and place your hand on her stomach. With your other hand, rub her back in an upward motion. This may allow her to burp more easily.

**Diaper rash**
Dirty and wet diapers will irritate diaper rash and make your baby fussy. If you use cotton diapers, be sure to use a mild detergent and rinse two or three times. Clean baby’s bottom well with warm soapy water, rinse well and pat dry. Allow several minutes without diapers for his bottom to dry; the air will help with healing. You may use a cream or ointment on the baby’s bottom to promote healing and protect his skin. Check with your baby’s doctor if the rash is worsening or does not get better in three days.

**“Missing the womb”**
Your baby has listened to your heartbeat and your voice, and felt your movement for the past nine months of pregnancy. Rhythmic sounds and music often will comfort her. Allow her to lie on your chest so she can hear your heartbeat, and sing lullabies. Babies are warm and snug in the womb, so they often like to be wrapped snugly in blankets (swaddled) with their hands near their faces.

You can also try:
- Rocking your baby slowly and rhythmically.
- Repetitive noise, such as radio static, the vacuum cleaner, or the sound of a clothes dryer or fan.
- Car rides (using a car seat).

**Too hot or too cold**
Dress the baby as you would dress for temperature comfort, with one extra light layer of clothing. She may perspire when crying, in which case it may help to take off some clothing. Know your baby’s normal temperature, so if she is too hot or cold, you will know by checking her temperature.

**Hunger**
Even though the baby just ate, he may still be hungry. Formula fed babies may eat every three to four hours, whereas breast-fed babies may eat every one to three hours. Cluster feeding (eating more at certain times and then not eating for a longer period) is normal, especially until your milk comes in, or as your baby sleeps for longer periods. Just as your appetite varies, so does his. During periods of rapid growth (growth spurts) he will eat more often. These may occur at two to three weeks, six weeks and three months.

**Boredom**
Babies like stimulation during the day. Simply carrying the baby from room to room and talking quietly to her may be all she needs. If the weather is good, a walk outside to see new objects and colors may work great. Taking a bath with your infant can be relaxing for both of you, and babies love skin-to-skin contact with their parents.

Continued
Over-stimulation
Not all fussy babies have colic. Over-stimulated babies calm best in darker, quieter places. They get more upset if you try the movements and noises that often soothe colicky babies. An over-stimulated baby fusses less if you rub his back to burp him (patting will get him more upset). These babies prefer a slow, low tone of voice rather than a fast, high, singsong voice.

Evening fussies
Many newborns seem to have a fussy period every day, usually during the evening hours. Often, it seems they want only to cry and eat, cry and eat. Although this can be trying for new parents, it is normal newborn behavior. Try any of the comforting methods above for these fussy times.

If you are at the end of your rope
Get physically away from the baby. Put the baby in his or her crib, close the door, go to another room and close that door.
• Turn on soothing music.
• Use your relaxation techniques.
• Call a friend or hot line.
• Take a shower.
• When you are feeling more in control, you’ll be better able to handle baby’s fussiness.

Where to call for help
If you start to feel out of control or angry and you have no support person with you, call the toll-free 24-hour Childhelp USA National Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD. Trained, caring staff members will listen to you and give you support or advice any time, day or night.

Never, never shake a baby. Shaking a baby can lead to brain damage. If you think you cannot handle your baby’s fussiness, call for help. Friends, relatives and neighbors can help by giving you a short break to eat, freshen up and regain your energy.