

Module 5: Infant Soothing

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Babies Have Lots of Needs

When babies are born early, they have not finished developing. Babies' brains continue to develop after they have been born. They are used to feeling warm, swaddled, rocked, and are used to the peaceful sound of the amniotic fluid flowing around them when they are inside their mother. They cry to communicate a need. Normal crying can sometimes occur for several hours a day for many reasons. Here are some examples:

- They want comfort
- They are hungry
- They are tired
- They are wet
- There is too much noise
- They are sick
- They are cold

This can be frustrating to parents, but there are some things you can do:

- Try to sooth the baby if he/she is crying. Even if the baby is hungry or wet, you can try to soothe the baby first to calm him/her
- Try putting the baby on his/her side and rocking him/her



Swaddling

One way you can try soothing your baby is by swaddling him or her. Swaddling is wrapping your crying or fussy baby snugly, arms at her sides, in a thin blanket. Ideally, with the arms wrapped inside as well. Here are some other key points:

- Swaddling soothes babies by providing the secure feeling they enjoyed before birth.
- Swaddling keeps your baby's arms from flailing and prevents startling or scratching which could cause the baby to cry. It also lets your baby know that it's time to sleep.
- You can swaddle your baby every time they go to sleep. Always lay your baby down to sleep on her back – never on her side or tummy. To avoid overheating, use a thin blanket and make sure the room isn't too warm.
- Swaddling is not hard to do, but you do need to learn the proper technique to make sure swaddling will be safe and effective. The idea is to wrap babies snugly so they won't try to wiggle out of the swaddle, but leave enough room at the bottom of the blanket for them to bend their legs up and out from their body. (Swaddling the legs straight can lead to hip problems).

Here's a video that gives an example of how to [swaddle your baby](#).



Shushing

Another way you can try to soothe your baby is by using shushing. Shushing is a sound that calms and comforts your baby, helps stop crying and fussing, and helps your baby go to sleep and stay asleep.

Newborns don't need silence. In fact, having just spent months in utero – where Mom's blood flow makes a shushing sound louder than a vacuum cleaner – they're happier, they're able to calm down, and they sleep better in a noisy environment. Not all noises are alike, however.

How to do it:

- At its simplest, you "shush" by loudly saying "shhh" into your swaddled baby's ear as you hold her on her side or tummy. Put your lips right next to your baby's ear and "shhh" loudly.
- Shush as loudly as your baby is crying. As she calms down, lower the volume of your shushing to match.

Other tips:

- You can also play a recording of white noise while your baby sleeps. Some sounds are much more effective than others, however. Fans, sound machines, and recordings of ocean waves may not work. Recommended sounds are more low and "rumbly" (like the sounds in the womb). You can experiment and see what helps your baby.
- Play the sounds as loud as your baby is crying to calm her down. To accompany sleep, play them as loud as a shower.

White Noise Apps for your phone:

- [Click here](#) if you have an iPhone
- [Click here](#) if you have an Android

[Baby Center](#) is a great resource for Swaddling and Shushing information

Other Things to Try

Here are some other ideas you can try when your baby is fussy:

- Try a pacifier
- Try singing quietly
- Take him/her to a quiet room if there is too much noise

Feed Baby. Feeling hungry is quite unpleasant for a baby. They cry to communicate that they need food.

Change Baby. Feeling wet or cold can be very unpleasant for a baby. Babies lose body heat at a much faster rate than adults, and they often don't have the fat layer to insulate them against cold like adults do. Try changing a wet diaper and be sure they are warm enough.



Fussy Baby Network

It can feel very overwhelming trying to take care of your baby and handle them when they are fussy. You are not alone! The Fussy Baby Network is an organization that offers a warmline that parents can call when they need some extra help. The organization also provides a prevention home visiting program for families who were struggling with their baby's crying, sleeping, or feeding during the first year of life.

You can contact them at 1-888-431-BABY (2229) or [click here](#) to visit their website.



How to Calm Yourself Down if You Feel Frustrated

If you become frustrated with your baby's cries – there are some things you can do. Take some really deep breaths. [Here is a video](#) that gives you an example.

Remind yourself that babies cry to communicate. They are uncomfortable. Think about how you feel when you are really, really tired. It is not fun. Now imagine that you don't know why you feel bad and you don't know how to put yourself to sleep. Baby's need to learn to soothe themselves to sleep. They LEARN how to do this by months and months of you teaching them – by soothing them.

If you are still frustrated, try focusing your mind on your breath. This is called mindfulness (Visit the Mindfulness Module under the Stress Toolkit).

If you become really frustrated, put your baby safely in his/her crib on his/her back. Call a friend, get some support, take more deep breaths and try to calm yourself down. Be kind to yourself. It is hard to be a parent.



Great job!!

You're another step closer to finishing the CHECK Prematurity Online Program.
Hopefully you now know more about different ways you can help soothe your baby.

Now you can move on to the next topic, which shares different stories of other parents who have premature babies.

