

Getting to Know your Newborn



Why does my baby cry?

Many parents worry when their babies cry. Your baby will cry to tell you that he is too hot or too cold, that he needs his diaper changed, or that he's uncomfortable. He will also cry to tell you that he's overwhelmed by what's going on around him. You are getting to know your baby. It may be hard to know exactly why he is crying. He is working hard to get to know you too. As you get to know each other, it will get easier.



How can I tell what my baby needs?

Your baby is already trying hard to show you what she needs. She is learning to use her face, body, and noises to show you when she needs to eat, wants to play, or needs something to be different. We call these movements and sounds "cues." It will take time for her to learn which cues work best. While you get to know each other better, you may have to guess what she needs. Soon, you will understand the cues your baby gives most often. It won't take long before you both get better at communicating with each other.



What do cues look like?

When your baby is comfortable and alert, she will use her face, body, and voice to tell you she is ready to interact with you. She will be relaxed and stare at you. She may even follow your voice and face with her eyes. When she is uncomfortable or upset, she will look or arch away from you. Her body, arms, and legs will be stiff. She may frown or have a glazed look in her eyes. It may seem like she is mad at you, but don't worry. These are just ways she will tell you she needs something to be different.



How do I respond to cues?

Your baby's cues won't tell you exactly what she needs. At first you will need to guess. That is ok! When she's using cues to show she's ready to learn and play, show her your face. She will like looking at you as you talk to her. When she uses cues to show she needs something to be different, try to figure out what is bothering her. If the reason is obvious, like a dirty diaper or a bright light shining on her, fix the problem as soon as you can. If she starts to cry and you cannot see why she is upset, she might be overwhelmed. Try holding her close, gently rocking her in your arms. Repeat the same sounds and movements over and over. It may take a few minutes, but it will help calm her.

Why does my baby wake so easily?

When your baby falls asleep, she will be in light sleep. You will see movement in her face and body. Her eyes will flutter and she may even make little noises. These are signs that your baby is dreaming. Dreaming is important for her brain development. When she is dreaming, she will wake up easily. She must be able to wake up quickly if she needs you. Right now she needs to wake often to eat, get her diaper changed, and learn about her world. It may be hard for you to deal with so much waking, but when she is older, she'll sleep for longer stretches. In the meantime, it is important for you to ask for help at home! Getting help from friends and family members can help you get more rest.



Can my baby sleep too much?

Yes, newborn babies can sometimes sleep too much. Your baby may be sleeping so much that she isn't getting enough to eat. Her stomach is small and she needs to be fed often, so you may need to wake her up to feed her. Talk to your doctor about how often your baby should be eating. Each time your baby goes to sleep, she will spend time in both light and deep sleep. If your baby seems to be very hard to wake, she may be spending more time in deep sleep. When your baby is in deep sleep, her body will be relaxed and she won't move much. Her breathing will be steady and she will not wake easily. Deep sleep is good for your baby to be healthy. Right now, your baby needs about the same amount of deep and light sleep. This will change as she gets older.