

CRYING & FUSSY INFANTS

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INQUIRE



- Crying and fussiness increases in the early weeks of life.
- It peaks around 6 to 8 weeks old and declines by 3 to 4 months old.



- It's usually worse in the late afternoon and evening.



- It may last several hours and the infant may draw up their legs as if in pain, but this DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE ACTUALLY IN PAIN.



IDENTIFY



- Sudden onset of irritability and crying
 - Excessive crying is a strong risk factor for abusive head trauma
 - Irritable and...

CONSOLABLE - vs - INCONSOLABLE

An infant is inconsolable when soothing techniques agitate the patient more, which is concerning for sepsis, pain, meningitis, and NAT.

- Remember "IT CRIES"

Infection (UTI, sepsis, meningitis, otitis media)

Trauma/Tourniquet/Tetanus vaccine/Toxins (SDH, NAT, rib fractures, hair/synthetic material tourniquet of digits, DTap)

Cardiac (SVT, congenital)

Reaction to meds, reflux, rectal/anal fissures

Intussusception

Eyes/Electrolytes (Corneal abrasion, corneal FB, infantile glaucoma, hyponatremia)

Strangulation, inguinal hernia, testicular/ovarian torsion, surgical process



INTERVENE

DO

- Obtain detailed history and examination
- Differentiate pathologic vs non-pathologic causes of crying
- Non-pathologic causes: hot, cold, tired, hungry, uncomfortable, soiled diaper
- Consider reflux, milk protein allergy, lactose overload, malabsorption (non-pathologic)
- Work up pathologic causes as necessary
- If non-pathologic, give reassurance and educate the parent(s)

DO NOT

- Prescribe anti-reflux meds or simethicone, which are ineffective in reducing crying
- Prescribe anticholinergics, which have a risk of serious adverse events such as apneas and seizures
- Prescribe colic mixtures (gripe water), which have no proven benefit
- Use probiotics
- Change formula; it's not helpful unless there is proven cow milk allergy

DISPOSITION

Pathologic



Based on clinical status

Non-pathologic



Offer reassurance and discharge home

PEM NUGGETS

- Crying and fussing are physiologic behavior in infants.
- With typical history and normal examination, no investigations are required.
- Parental education and close follow-up are vital.
- Excessive crying is associated with higher rates of parental post-natal depression.
- At 6 to 8 weeks old, a baby cries 2 to 3 hours in a 24-hour period on average.



- "Colic" is an outdated term used to describe excessive crying.

- Parents are often confused, distressed, exhausted, and have possibly received conflicting advice.