

Surviving Colic

Staying Positive While Parenting

Although children bring joy, parenting can be stressful. Children go through periods of normal development when their behavior is likely to trigger feelings of exhaustion, frustration, even anger. When parents feel overwhelmed, they are more likely to overreact or hurt their child.

We have created this series to help parents and caregivers better understand and cope with some of the frustrations of parenting.



What It Is

During the first three months after birth, some babies have times during the day when they cry frantically. This piercing crying can last up to three hours. Nothing seems to bring comfort. The crying can occur at any time of the day or night, but it usually occurs at the same time each day. It is at its worst when a baby is six weeks old. Many babies outgrow colic by four months. For some babies, it takes six months.

The treatment for colic involves comforting the baby and making sure that nothing is wrong. If you believe that your baby suffers from colic, talk to his doctor.

A screaming baby who doesn't respond to comforting can trigger an angry response, such as shaking or throwing the baby. This can cause serious head injury or death. One of the best things that you can do for a colicky baby is to control your own feelings of frustration.

Surviving Colic

What To Do

When your baby does not respond to comforting and continues to cry and wail, you can begin to feel frustrated, even frantic. When this happens, you need to walk away and take a break. It is OK to let your baby cry in her crib for 15 minutes. Place your baby on her back in her crib and walk out of room. Then

Reduce the sound of your baby's crying:

- ◆ Close the door to the room your baby is in.
- ◆ Turn on a fan or white noise machine.
- ◆ Turn on the TV.
- ◆ Play music.

Spend 15 minutes doing things that will help you feel less tense:

- ◆ Sit in a chair and breathe slowly and deeply.
- ◆ Lie down with a cool cloth on your forehead.
- ◆ Do yoga or stretching exercises.
- ◆ Do aerobic exercises like dancing or running in place.

Take care of your own physical needs:

- ◆ Eat a healthy snack.
- ◆ Drink some herbal tea or juice.
- ◆ Take a shower.

If after 15 minutes you still feel tense and angry, get some support:

- ◆ Call a friend or family member.
- ◆ Ask someone to take care of your baby so you can get away for 15 minutes.

Your baby can't help crying, and you may not be able to soothe him. No one can take care of a colicky baby alone. Get help and support until your baby outgrows this kind of crying.



Surviving Separation Anxiety

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What It Is

At about nine months of age, babies usually become fearful of new people and places. They become clingy and may fuss if they can't see a parent. When a parent leaves, they may cry. This separation anxiety lasts until they turn two and become more independent.

In the beginning, parents may enjoy being needed. After a while, though, they can feel resentful that they are unable to have any time to themselves. They may worry that their child is getting spoiled. This need to be with a parent is not the result of spoiling. It takes time to learn that a parent goes away and comes back.

A child who is fussing and crying is at risk for being slapped or spanked. This is more likely if the parent is rushed or frustrated by the child's behavior.

Surviving Separation Anxiety

What To Do

Help your child learn the two of you can be separated.

- Talk with your baby's doctor about games, like peek-a-boo, that you can play.
- When you are with your baby and leave his sight, talk to him. The sound of your voice will comfort him.

Expect that your child will cry when you leave her.

- Many children stop crying very quickly if they are distracted with a toy or activity.
- If your child cries most of the time while you are away, talk with your baby's doctor about ways to help her be less anxious.

Enduring your child's crying every time you leave can be very stressful. To help make leaving easier and reduce your stress:

- Choose someone you trust and who is familiar to your child to take care of him.
- Create a good-bye routine. Say that you are going. Give your child a hug. Put your child down or hand him to someone else. Wave and say bye-bye as you leave.
- Try to get ready a few minutes before you have to leave. That way your child will be less likely to start fussing because you are rushing around and tense.

A baby who is upset with your leaving can't help crying. Yelling at her will only make her cry and cling more. Try to focus on a calm response:

- Close your eyes for 5 seconds to get hold of your emotions.
- Take a long, slow breath before you speak.
- Use a calm and reassuring tone. This can help calm your baby.
- Use your good-bye routine as you leave.

It will likely take over a year for your child to stop fussing and crying when you leave. It's OK to leave him with a caring person even though he is upset.



Surviving Normal Poor Appetite

Staying Positive While Parenting

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What It Is

Children from ages 18 months to 3 years eat less than they did. This is a normal and healthy change because their growth slows down. It also happens at the same time as normal negativism. As part of their striving for independence, toddlers want to make food choices and feed themselves. If given poor choices, such as a lot of sweets, they may not choose enough healthy foods. If they drink a lot of juice or milk, they are often not hungry enough to eat much solid food. Toddlers also reject foods they have eaten in the past. Limiting choices to healthy foods means a toddler always makes a good choice.

At times parents can feel overwhelmed by a toddler's eating habits. When a child rejects food they have prepared, parents can overreact and attempt to force feed or trick the child into eating more than he wants. Force feeding can result in injuries to the mouth or back of the throat.

Surviving Normal Poor Appetite

What To Do

When a toddler starts eating less, parents may worry that they are not being a good parent. This worrying can become stressful. You can reduce this stress.

- ◆ Talk to your child's doctor about how much food she needs to grow and stay healthy.
- ◆ Measure the amount of food your child needs. That way you will have a better idea of what the right amount looks like.

Reduce the struggle over eating by keeping toddler meals simple and letting your child make some choices.

- ◆ He could choose which of two fruits to have with lunch.
- ◆ He could choose the bowl for his cereal.

Toddlers are messy eaters. This mess can make a parent want to feed the child. However, toddlers want to feed themselves and may refuse to be fed. This is not only frustrating; it can lead to an injury from force feeding. You can reduce your frustration when your child feeds herself.

- ◆ Make the area where your child eats easy to clean.
- ◆ Serve small amounts of food she can eat with her fingers.
- ◆ Monitor your child for choking, but don't focus all your attention on each bite.
- ◆ If this isn't a family meal, use this time to eat a healthy snack or take care of a small task like writing your grocery list.

Forcing a child to eat can turn into an ongoing battle over food. Overeating in childhood can lead to obesity later in life.



Surviving Exploring and Testing Limits

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What It Is

Babies begin exploring by nine months. They start putting toys in their mouth to learn about them. By the time they are toddlers, they spend a great deal of time exploring. They test the world around them, their own abilities and the limits to their parents' rules. When children are mobile and can walk, this testing and exploring can become very challenging.

Parents need to protect children from harm during this stage. They are at risk for poisoning, falling down steps and off furniture and getting an electric shock. Sometimes when a parent rescues the child from danger, the child becomes angry or aggressive. Often a child goes right back to the danger, making her seem defiant. That can make the parent lose patience or become outraged and hit the child.

Sometimes a child is well behaved around others and only tests limits when his parents are around. This is because he feels most comfortable with them. However, because it looks like he is deliberately disobeying them, his parents may overreact.

Surviving Exploring and Testing Limits

What To Do

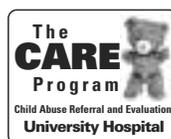
It is exhausting and frustrating when your toddler explores an area that has things that can hurt her. It is easier to make an area safe for your child than to keep your child away from the dangerous things.

- ♦ Make your home as child-safe as you can. That way you will not have to always be on high alert.
- ♦ Make at least one room or a self-contained area a safe place for your toddler to play. That way you both can enjoy her exploring. It is also a place the two of you can go if her testing has made you impatient.

When you feel overwhelmed or angry with your toddler's exploring and testing, be aware that you could handle him roughly or hurt him to show the danger.

- ♦ You don't need to hit your child to show him you are alarmed by his dangerous activity. He will notice the change in your voice and sudden action.
- ♦ Give both of you a 15-minute break. Put him in his crib with a toy and go to another room. Then, take care of yourself:
 - ♦ If you haven't eaten well, eat a healthy snack.
 - ♦ Do a relaxing or stress-relieving activity.
 - ♦ Call a friend.

Your toddler is not trying to drive you crazy; he is trying to learn about the world.

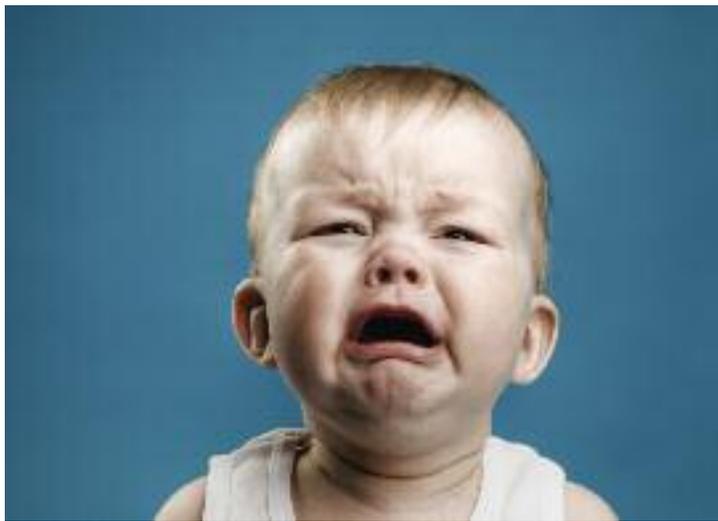


Surviving Nighttime Awakening

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What It Is

Before three months of age, babies generally waken at night and usually need to be fed. By four months, they begin to sleep for longer periods at night. This allows their parents to get some much-needed rest. Some babies, however, do not develop normal sleep patterns. They keep waking during the night, wanting to play or be comforted.

Lack of sleep can cause parents to become exhausted. Being overtired makes it difficult to stay calm while parenting. Babies who have a pattern of waking up in the night and crying are at risk for being shaken or hit.

There are ways to help babies learn to sleep through the night. Talk to your baby's doctor about helping your baby learn to go to sleep without your holding or rocking her. That will help your baby go back to sleep without your help.

Surviving Nighttime Awakening

What To Do

Make a plan about how you will help your baby learn to fall asleep and get back to sleep by himself.

- ♦ Reassure yourself that if your baby wakes in the night and begins to fuss, it's OK to let him settle himself. You don't need to rock or cuddle him back to sleep.
- ♦ If your baby calls out to you wanting to play, it's OK to just call back to him that its time to sleep.
- ♦ If you think your baby needs an item in order to settle, give it to him without turning on the light or talking to him.
- ♦ If he needs to be touched, gently pat or stroke him for a minute. Don't pick him up.

Babies go through phases of not sleeping through the night.

- ♦ Try to focus on helping your baby self-comfort and fall back to sleep by herself.
- ♦ If your baby needs special attention, give it in your baby's room. Then put your baby back in her crib.
- ♦ Don't bring your baby into your bed. Having your baby sleep with you rewards your baby for waking up.

If your baby's crying at night upsets you, avoid handling him roughly, shaking him or forcing him to lie down. It is better to place your baby in his crib on his back and walk out of the room.

- ♦ It is OK to let your baby cry for 15 minutes. He may fall asleep on his own during this time.
- ♦ Use the time to help yourself cool down and get your feelings under control.
- ♦ If your baby is still crying after 15 minutes and you are still upset, try to get another adult to help your baby.

Although it's hard not to reward your baby for waking up in the night, she needs to learn to soothe herself back to sleep.



Surviving Normal Negativism

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What It Is

From around the time children learn to walk to about three years of age, they often say NO to a suggestion or request. This negativism is part of learning to be independent. Sometimes parents respond to a toddler's refusals by taking it personally. They feel disrespected and become angry. Parents can feel inadequate when their toddler smirks and delights in testing limits. As a result, they may threaten or hit the child. When parents hit a child in anger, they can leave marks or cause a serious injury.

During this phase it is important to keep your toddler safe and help him develop by having him make simple choices. Getting into an argument or trying to win a match of wills doesn't work. It usually ends in frustration for both of you. It's better to be ready to meet the NO with a simple choice that he can make. This choice gives your toddler the freedom to be independent.

Surviving Normal Negativism

What To Do

If your toddler's NO brings a flare of anger, try to give yourself a 30-second break to calm down.

- ♦ As long as your child is safe, look away. That will break the cycle you are in.
- ♦ Take a couple of deep breaths and let them out slowly. This can help you relax.
- ♦ Open your hands wide and shake them to get rid of the tension.
- ♦ Yawn to relax your jaw.

If you feel you have to show your child you are the boss, be aware that you may act in anger.

- ♦ Take a step back and let your arms hang at your sides. Focus on calming your body.
- ♦ Repeat silently a saying that brings you comfort.
- ♦ Try to keep a sense of humor. Laughing at the situation – not your child – can have a way of disarming the situation.

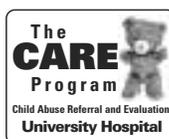
Avoid getting into power struggles and standoffs.

- ♦ The way your child refuses may remind you of a family member. Try not to let feelings about that person add to difficulties with your toddler.
- ♦ Vary your approach to a negative response. If you always say and do the same things, you and your toddler are more likely to repeat a frustrating pattern.

Dealing calmly with negativism is hard and can leave you feeling exhausted.

- ♦ Talk to other parents about how they respond to a toddler's NO.
- ♦ Call a friend or family member and share your frustrations.
- ♦ Schedule a break from taking care of your toddler and do something for yourself.

Try to keep in mind that the NO is not about you. It is your toddler testing being independent.



Surviving Toilet Training

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What It Is

Using the toilet requires complex skills. Children need to know when they are about to have a bowel movement and be able to picture the potty in another room. They also have to be able to pull their pants up and down. Toilet training can begin with children as early as one or as late as four years of age. Most children are ready to begin at about age two and a half.

Planning for toilet training can make it easier. Parents can provide easy to remove pants and a child-size potty. Parents also need to recognize signs the child is about to pee or have a bowel movement. That way they can prompt the child to use the potty. Most of all, parents need to be aware of changes in the child's abilities and interest in using the potty.

Some parents begin toilet training before the child is ready. Then, they become frustrated when the child does not learn. Most children have accidents for several months after they seem trained. This, too, can be upsetting for parents. Responding with uncontrolled anger when a child has a soiling accident can result in bruises, fractures and scald burns.

Surviving Toilet Training

What To Do

Toilet training is a joint effort. Don't start until both of you are ready.

- ◆ If there is a big change like a move or a new baby, it may be better not to add the stress of starting training.
- ◆ Ignore comments from other parents about how easily their child was toilet trained.
- ◆ The age a child succeeds at toilet training is not a sign of intelligence.
- ◆ The fact that your child is still wearing diapers does not mean you are a bad parent.
- ◆ If toilet training is not working, it's OK to stop. Try again in a few months when your child shows more readiness and interest.

The complexity of the process means progress is uneven.

- ◆ A child may be able to wear underwear during the day but need diapers at night.
- ◆ Be prepared for accidents. Pack extra clothing when you leave home.
- ◆ If your child has other caregivers, coordinate your approach.
- ◆ Delight in successes and greatly praise them.

If you feel a surge of anger because of a lapse, calm yourself before cleaning your child.

- ◆ Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
- ◆ Have your child go to or wait in the bathroom while you wash your hands with warm water. The water flowing over your hands can be calming.
- ◆ If you are using a bath to clean your child, make sure the water is warm, not hot.

Toilet training takes time. View accidents as part of the process rather than as failures.

