



OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION SERVICE

## Crying at Night

### Information for Parents

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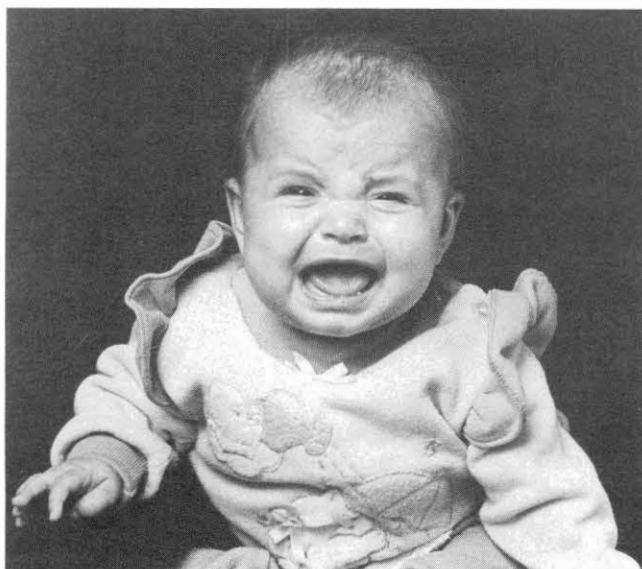
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Many babies cry during the night. Listening to a baby cry is very difficult for parents. Babies cry at night for different reasons. If you think your baby is sick or frightened, you should comfort your baby. However, after a baby is about four months old, parents can expect a baby to sleep eight hours straight.

Some babies develop a **habit** of waking up in the night and crying. These babies are usually four to five months of age or older and have given up their middle-of-the-night bottle.

If your baby wakes up at night and cries, the baby may not know how to help himself fall back to sleep. For example, if the baby always falls asleep in your arms and then is placed in his crib, he may not learn how to quiet himself.

Sometimes night crying follows an illness. Sick babies may become used to being removed from the crib and demand it when they are well.



Babies who have developed a habit of night crying can learn to sleep through the night. You can teach your baby to sleep through the night. Explain to your family what you are doing so they can help you.

#### **Ideas for well babies who are four months or older who do not sleep through the night:**

- Shorten your baby's daytime naps.
- Place your baby in the crib while awake, especially in the daytime for naps. Your baby learns to fall asleep on his own.
- Remove crib from your room. If this is not possible, use a screen or curtain so baby cannot see you.
- Remove all toys from the crib. Leave a small blanket or soft, cuddly toy.
- Develop a regular bedtime routine such as bath, story, and quiet time. Babies like routines. Follow these steps for quiet time:
  1. Place your baby in the crib at the same time every night; hug your baby, say "goodnight," and leave the room. You can leave a night-light on — babies fall asleep easily with light in the room.
  2. Wait five minutes if your baby begins to cry. After five minutes, make a quick check on the baby. Make this visit brief, no longer than 30 seconds. Do not play with the baby. Leave the baby in the crib.
  3. Let your baby cry for 20 minutes before checking on him again.
  4. Make your next check as brief as before. Stay no longer than one minute. Most babies get tired and fall asleep at this time. Usually after the second or third night, babies stop crying and begin sleeping through the night.
  5. Make sure the blanket, pacifier, or stuffed animal the child usually sleeps with is in the bed with him and reachable. This may mean **safely** tying the pacifier with a **short** ribbon on the stuffed animal so it is "findable" in the middle of the night.

Letting your baby "cry it out" is not appropriate for babies younger than four months old. Sick babies, colicky babies, and frightened babies of all ages need to be comforted.

Some babies need more solid foods in the daytime. Talk to your Parent Educator or a health care professional about your baby's diet.

## Extra Reading for Parents

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