



the first month

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**3-12 WEEKS GASSY, RASHY, &
FUSSY: HELP!!!!**

Dr. Deena shares her tips on how to handle a fussy infant from a medical and a mother's perspective.

This is a follow up from my [last article hospital to home](#). You finally feel like you've got that part down; and now your baby seems to have changed almost overnight. The weeks between 3-12 weeks of life can be a really challenging time as a parent. I often say at the five week visit that babies this age are usually gassy, rashy (my made-up word) and fussy. Parents usually nod in agreement and look relieved that it's not just them. In my opinion, this just may be the most challenging age.

Until 2-3 weeks of age most babies eat, sleep and poop. They spend little time awake. Then at 3 weeks old they seem to wake up with a bang but their stomachs haven't quite matured which can lead to gassiness and fussing. They are also often rashy at this age. Of course, this is right as you have it together enough to take photos, and your four-week old looks like a pimply teenager. But worry not, the rashes come and go and almost always resolve on their own. Baby rashes are a long topic so I'll save that for another post.

One of the worst sounds a parent can hear is the sound of their child crying. Worse yet, is when your infant is crying and you can't figure out why. You've changed them, burped them, fed them but they are still crying. Sometimes, babies this age cry just for crying sake; it is a normal part of development at this age. All babies cry and fuss during this life stage, but some more than others. Healthy infants in this age group can cry up to four hours a day! The peak age for fussiness is about 6-8 weeks and it almost always resolves by 13 weeks of age. As a mother to two boys who were both on the extreme end of fussiness I say with true empathy, I know how hard this can be. I can also tell you, this gets better (or I would only have one son.)

Below are some tips for helping you deal with a fussy infant. **Huge disclaimer:** Nothing I suggest will work all the time. Some may not work for your child at all. Others may seem like a life saver. Sometimes, it may even feel like your child is resisting all attempts to be soothed. Infants this age are random. We as logical thinking human beings want to make sense of them but can't. Which leads me to my first rule:

- 1. Babies this age are not predictable.** This doesn't mean you can't try and stick to a routine, just know it won't work all of the time. As I said, most of us are rational, thinking, planning individuals but sadly our infants are not. You want to think you did X (you fill in the blank) yesterday and your baby slept for four hours straight. Then you do the same today and it doesn't work. That's because babies this age are random. What worked today may not work tomorrow. If you can accept that randomness from about 2-13 weeks of life, it will make it easier to get through (yes, easier said than done.)
- 2. Try movement and bouncing.** You can hold your baby and gently sway side to side. You can sing to your baby while you do this or gently stroke their back. Babies who tend to cry a lot often respond to motion. You can also try the bouncy chair, the rock and play, a stroll through the park. Try to put your baby in a carrier and walk around. This frees up your hands and provides the soothing motion of your body movements.

3. **Try white noise.** Many babies respond to the sound of running water, the vacuum cleaner or the hair dryer. You can buy a white noise machine or download a white noise app. Just make sure to place it across the room so as not to affect your baby's hearing
4. **Take all the help you can get and don't be afraid to ask for help.** I'm sure you know the expression "it takes a village." Well, to care for a child on the fussier end it certainly does. Let family or friends watch the baby so you can nap, shower, go for a manicure, whatever is relaxing for you. If no one has reached out to you, they may not want to bother you. Ask for help. Take a break. If you are feeling overwhelmed and don't know where to start, start by calling your pediatrician. They can help you and provide you with more resources.
5. **Try a probiotic.** As long as your baby does not have milk protein intolerance, you can try a probiotic. The current probiotic on the market for babies this age is lactobacillus reuteri. While there are many "colic cures" out there, this probiotic is the only one that has been proven in studies to significantly decrease the amount of crying per day. As with anything you give your baby, check with your pediatrician before giving a probiotic or any other "colic cure." Many are ineffective but harmless however, others can be dangerous and unsafe for your baby. Therefore, check with your pediatrician before giving anything you were not advised about.
6. **There can be medical reasons for increased fussiness.** First and foremost, if you think your child is unusually fussy take them to the pediatrician to make sure there is not an underlying medical problem. Other things to look for: If your child seems unusually fussy or the fussiness is always feeding related talk to your pediatrician. If you see blood in your child's stool call. If your child has fever (100.4 F), cannot be consoled for over an hour, spits up something green call right away. As always, trust your instinct as a parent. Even though you may feel very new at this, you know your child best. If something feels off or you just need support or advice go ahead and call. Your pediatrician is there to guide you through parenting, medical advice, family wellness and so much more. Pediatricians tend to be a great resource. If you have questions, reach out.

To sum up, try different things. Remember what worked today may not work tomorrow but may work next week. This too shall pass. It's very hard to remember that while you are going through it but once it passes you quickly forget just how hard it was (kind of like labor). Keep in mind, it's nothing you did or didn't do and just because your child is on the fussier end now does not mean they will stay like that forever. My three-year-old cried every day for weeks 3-10 of life and he is the sweetest, most adorable, easy going child. So, hang in there. As with most things in life, this too shall pass.