

Simple Steps to Calm Your Fussy Baby

It's everyone's fear - the fussy baby who requires constant attention. You can't put him down, talk on the phone, or cook dinner. Often times these babies don't nap or sleep for long stretches of time, making it even more taxing on you. Here are some tips to help you distract and entertain your fussy baby and preserve some sanity.

Learn your baby's sleep cues and do everything you can to maximize his sleep – both naps and nighttime. Some amount of fussiness may be due to your baby being overtired.

Increase physical contact. Carry or wear your baby often. Fussy babies need this close proximity to mama and the sense of safety that it brings. For whatever reason they seem to need more help to regulate their temperament, control their emotions and settle themselves.

Change the location. Either leave the house or just step out the door. The change in air flow, temperature, light and sounds is often enough to distract a baby and help them calm down. This one can be a real benefit for your sanity as well.

Change the view. Look out a window or look in a mirror. Let your baby get close enough to touch his reflection. Wave and make faces. Play peek-a-boo by stepping out of sight from the mirror, then slowly stepping back over to the mirror so your reflections return.

Offer your baby varying textures to feel. Pat the Bunny is a great book of textures that my first son loved to gnaw on. Sadly, it didn't last long so making your own collection of household items is a cheaper alternative. A soft Minkee™ blanket, a scrap of fake fur, a piece of sand paper, a soft hairbrush, a wooden spoon or smooth textured a coffee mug are good choices. Just be sure to hold them so your baby doesn't drop them on his face or put them in his mouth – especially the sandpaper.

Sensory experiences are the very best fussy busters, even as children age. Unfortunately at such a young age your options are limited. The sound and sight of running water can be enough. If your baby is sitting up by himself place a small amount of water on a cookie sheet then place that on a towel on the kitchen floor and let him splash in the water. If he's not sitting up by himself you can turn on the faucet to a trickle then hold him close enough to put his hand in it and splash around. You can also take him in the bath or shower. Another sensory experience is to put your baby in his high chair and then put several spoons full of yogurt on the tray. Let him finger paint with it. Just be prepared for an involved clean-up when he's done.

Sometimes music, especially if it's familiar to him, can be a great fussy buster. Try various styles of music. Babies are individuals with their own preferences for things and can already have some pretty strong opinions!

Move gently while holding your baby. Dance, sway, bounce, or rock. You can also try putting him in a swing, stroller or take a drive in the car.

Fussy babies are often the highly intelligent ones who love buttons. Try holding your older baby close to the light switch and show him how to flip it. Babies also love buttons to push. Bebe Sounds makes a great fussy buster called the [Baby Buzz'r](#) that has a baby-safe mirror, soft ears to chew, and fun buttons for your baby to push which make it play music (but not too loudly), vibrate, and light up (but not too brightly). What I love about it is that it's not over stimulating with super bright lights and way-too-loud sounds like other battery-operated baby toys.

Try visual stimulation. With a quick trip to the fabric store you can find fleece or cotton in bright primary colors or black and white, bold patterns. Cotton fabrics need the edges finished with a straight stitch to keep them from unraveling but fleece can simply be cut and used. These are great for playing peek-a-boo with your baby.

This last trick for babies about 6 months and up should be reserved only for special occasions since it needs to be used infrequently to keep it effective. Create a fussy basket for times when you need to cook dinner and make phone calls. Include things like a soft hair brush, fake fur scraps, a baby-proof mirror, a teething toy, a drinking water bottle filled with beans or brightly colored beads and the lid sealed with a glue gun, a baby food jar with water, a teaspoon of corn syrup and glitter and the lid sealed shut with a glue gun, cold & warm items, bright colored nesting bowls, a television remote with battery door taped shut so the batteries can't come out, a disconnected keyboard with lots of buttons to push, a rubber spatula, a wooden spoon, a metal bowl or a metal pan lid. Leave the items in the basket or box so your baby can discover them one by one while taking them out.

Remember that fussiness won't last forever and those same traits that make him fussy – persistence, intelligence and sensitivity will make him a great person.

About the Author

Annette lives in Seattle with her husband Jared, sons Max and Lander, and their faithful flat-coated retriever. She is now a work-at-home-mom (WAHM) and founder of Moms in Clogs, makers of Pollywog brand products. Unable to find products beneficial for infant reflux, she designed the patented Pollywog nursing wedge and changing station incliner. Her website, www.PollywogBaby.com, provides practical advice, home remedies and support to help manage infant reflux and colic.

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