

# WELCOME BABY Newsletter for 2 Months

Dear Parents,

Two months old already, how are you and baby doing? By now most babies have begun to settle down and be a little less fussy. Do you find that's true? Many babies reach a peak of unexplained fussiness around six weeks of age and by eight weeks things seem better somehow. I hope this is happening for you. One of the most difficult parts of caring for a new baby, especially if this is your first experience parenting, is trying to figure out what to do when baby cries and fusses. Remember, baby's fussiness will not go on forever. You might be saying, "Oh, yeah?" Or perhaps, "What are you talking about, my baby isn't fussy." All babies are different, and yours, the most beautiful baby in the world, is trying let you know what he or she needs.

Infant fussiness is a stage of development, and Dr. Marc Weissbluth in his book **Your Fussy Baby** (Ballantine Books, New York, 2003), says fussing is to infants what adolescence is to teenagers, not a medical problem or a disease, but a stage to go through. Even though it is common and your baby is healthy, it doesn't mean it is easy to deal with.

Fussiness is different from crying, you've learned this already. Some babies take longer to "get organized" and need more swaddling, rocking and sucking. Trying to find what works takes some practice and it is important not to blame yourself. Everyone will have advice, but you know your baby best and if you suspect something is wrong and your baby needs medical help, call your doctor right away. If your baby was born prematurely or has other health issues, times of fussiness may be extended and you might still be experiencing difficulties.

But oh, those baby smiles! Sometimes a smile is all you need and you'll find yourself smiling until your cheeks ache, just waiting for another of baby's smile. It's wonderful, isn't it? The nice thing is your baby thinks you are perfect.



## COMFORTING and CRYING



Your baby is still a newborn; eight weeks old is very young in the big picture of life. Your baby is still trying to learn to soothe and comfort himself. You are trying to help him. Comforting yourself while taking care of him can be a challenge. Getting enough sleep for yourself still may be an issue; and trying to get things done while baby is sleeping may leave you with little time for relaxation or rest. Some of you may need to go back to work and worry about childcare and what will happen to your attachment to baby when you need to be gone all day. Just as babies try to get organized, so do you.

We learn to care about others from how we were cared for and comforted ourselves. Some people want to be just like their own parents, but others want to do things very differently. Most people fall somewhere in the middle, wanting to keep what was good from their parents, yet do some things quite differently. An infant's first few fussy months are opportunities for parents to talk with one another about ways to comfort their child – and each other. Learning to be gentle when one of you is falling apart is an important ingredient of intimacy and empathy.



Some days you may feel like crying more than your baby. **Crying is one of the body's natural stress relievers.** It is an important physiological process that allows us - grown-ups and babies alike - to cope with difficult situations. Closely related to laughter, crying actually helps us feel better – maybe not exactly at the time, but afterwards. When we cry, or feel like crying, we usually don't want someone to tell us to buck up and get over it, we just need to cry. It's the same with your baby; she may just need to cry sometimes.

**Your job is not to stop your baby's crying, but to pay attention to your baby and accept her crying with gentle cuddling and soft words. You want to help your baby feel safe and loved.**

Trying to distract a fussing baby and keep him from crying may just postpone the crying. Babies who are over stimulated can work themselves up until it's really difficult for them to settle down. Then you can feel almost as frantic as your baby. If this happens, simply put your baby in his little bed for five or ten minutes and give yourself a break. Call a

friend, your partner or spouse. Take some deep breaths, have a glass of water, and then, start the cycle again of soothing and comforting your baby. Swaddling him may still make a big difference if he is really in a fussy state.

Sometimes parents feel anxious when they can't comfort their baby and blame themselves, thinking if they weren't so anxious the baby wouldn't cry. It is most likely the opposite: the baby's normal crying and fussing makes you anxious. One mother said, "I thought in order to be a good mother, I should be able to make his crying stop." No wonder this time is often called the "baby blues." Please remember, the majority of infant crying and fussiness in the first few months is unexplained, it is part of the baby's work of getting organized.



The best way to comfort yourself is to try and get as much sleep as possible. When baby sleeps, you sleep. Not being able to sleep can wear parents out in a hurry and lack of sleep can make you frazzled indeed. If you feel like the "baby blues" are going on too long and you are having trouble getting a hold of your emotions, call your doctor or give us a call at WELCOME BABY! 360-419-3324 and we'll help you talk through what's going on and find information and support for you.

## IMMUNIZATIONS



Fussy crying is one thing, but wait until your baby needs to get immunized! Much as we want to, it isn't always possible to protect our children from pain, but we can certainly help them learn to cope with the emotions of painful events. Getting a shot hurts; getting a series of shots isn't any easier. So what's a parent to do?

Skagit County Public Health wants to make sure that every parent has good information about immunizations and vaccines. We have a booklet called, **Plain Talk About Childhood Immunizations**. We'll be happy to send you a copy, just give us a call, 360-419-3324. It is also possible to speak directly with a Public Health Nurse who can give you up to date and detailed information to help you make the best decision for you and your family. The general number for Public Health is 360-336-9380.

Sometimes parents are more upset than the baby about the immunizations. Here are some tips:

- Be sure to eat a good breakfast before you go in for shots, your own self-care is as important as caring for your baby.
- Try to relax and if possible bring Daddy or another family member who can watch any siblings, help you carry things, and be of comfort.
- Allow for plenty of time to ask questions. When it comes to your baby's health, there are no stupid questions. Write questions down ahead of time in case you tend to be nervous and forget.
- Take all the time you need to nurse and comfort your baby after he has had his shots.

As we mentioned above, crying helps babies cope with stress and is an important part of the healing process. If babies have a good cry and are immediately comforted and offered the breast or something to suck, they soon relax and forget. Parents sometimes worry that their baby will somehow be angry at them. Remember, your baby is still too young to get angry at you. A good cry helps your baby relax. Often after shots, babies are drowsy and sleep well.

Breastfeeding alone does not prevent vaccine-preventable diseases. Here are some things to think about:

- Immunizations save lives.
- Immunizations prevent the spread of disease.

Immunizations are safe.  
Immunizations are strong protection.

Children who have not been immunized are at far greater risk of becoming infected with serious diseases

An infant's immune system is not well developed and cannot easily fight off diseases, bacteria or viruses. The effects of disease are often more serious in infants than in older children.

Many of the diseases that vaccines prevent cannot be treated or cured easily.

Disease outbreaks can and do occur in communities that are not protected by immunization.

The number of recommended immunizations has increased because we are now able to safely protect children from serious diseases more than ever before.

About 75% of children in Washington State are immunized by the age of two; but in some areas, the rate is as low as 57%. This low rate puts more children at risk, especially those who travel by airplane.

Vaccines paid for with public funds are provided at no cost at most clinics in Washington State. You may be charged a small administrative fee.

No matter how calm or fussy our baby is, it seems like everyday we love her more and more. It is as though her very growing pains bring out the love in our hearts, sometimes love of a depth we didn't really know we had. Someone once said, "Love is what we've been through together." Love alone won't always be able to prevent our child from frustration, struggle or pain, but we know we can handle our baby, with gentleness, kindness and encouragement.



Perhaps you know this traditional song, here is the first verse:

Tell me why the stars do shine,  
Tell me why the ivy twines,  
Tell me why the skies are blue,  
And I will tell you just why I love you.



One of the great mysteries in life is how we fall in love with our new baby. The lullaby "Rock-a Bye Baby" sometimes seems disturbing, but in a way it is a metaphor for the day with baby. Just when you think all is smooth and quiet, baby wakes and fusses again. You change him and comfort him, swaddle and feed and rock him, hoping you can get him down in his cradle before he wakes again

Rock-a-bye baby, on the treetop.  
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.  
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,  
And down will come baby, cradle and all.



There will be times when you simply cannot figure out why your baby is crying and this is quite normal. Sing some lullabies, put on some soft music, pour yourself a cup of tea, call a friend, have a good cry. And if you don't live too far away, come to our Mother-Baby group in Mount Vernon, Tuesday afternoons, 2:00-4:00 p.m., St. Paul's Church, 415 S 18<sup>th</sup> St.. This is a drop-in group for first time parents; usually there are about 7 or 8 parents and babies there, and not everyone comes every week. It is a supportive and gentle time for talk and questions, songs and play. For more information, please call me or just come by, 360-419-3324.

Watch for another newsletter in a month or so. Best wishes for a good night's sleep! *Meredith Baker* ©2006

## REFERENCES

Here are some books for you to look through, your library should have them or can get them for you. Not every book will have every answer, nor do you need to read the whole book, but you may find some helpful ideas.

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child, Marc Weissbluth, M.D., Fawcett Books, New York, 1999.

Your Fussy Baby, Marc Weissbluth, M.D., Ballantine Books, New York, 2003.

The Happiest Baby on the Block, Harvey Karp, M.D., Bantam Books, New York, 2002.

The Aware Baby, Aletha J. Solter, Ph.D., Shining Star Press, California, 2001.

Please visit our website: [www.welcomebabywa.org](http://www.welcomebabywa.org)

WELCOME BABY! is a parent support and education program available to families of all children birth to age three in Skagit County. WELCOME BABY! is sponsored by Skagit County Public Health with supports from Skagit Valley Hospital, Island Hospital, Kiwanis, Rotary, Friends of Welcome Baby & Baby Talk and United Way of Skagit County.

**Please let us know if your mailing address changes, 360-419-3324.**