

# Fuss Management: Comforting Your Child

Babies and toddlers in movies or on television are usually sleeping or smiling. Real babies are sometimes fussy, and many toddlers have occasional temper tantrums. Sometimes a child's special needs can make it more challenging to comfort him. Here are some suggestions for parents on how to help their child when he's unhappy, crying, or screaming.



## Look for anything that might be making your child fuss.

- Is she tired, hungry, thirsty, hot, or cold? Does she have bunched up clothes or straps? Does she need a diaper change or a burp? Take care of these needs.
- Have his usual routines been upset? Try to avoid changing his times for sleep and meals. Plan time for play for both of you. Carry books and toys for use away from home.
- Is your child one who thrives on noise and attention, or do these frighten or overstimulate her? Provide some quiet time or a favorite blanket or toy to comfort your toddler.
- Does your baby have a regular fussy time most days? Try to comfort him, but know that it's okay to put him down and let him cry for a short time.

## Try to deal with an unhappy child calmly.

- An upset parent will have a hard time calming a child. First, calm yourself. If you need to do so, put the baby in a safe place, such as her crib or in the care of a trusted adult. Walk away and take a few deep breaths. Never scream at, hit, or shake a baby or toddler.
- Leave a public place if possible. If you can't take your child home, try to find a quiet lounge or corner away from other people.
- Find out what your baby finds comforting. Swaddle a newborn, or try holding her, rocking her, rubbing her back, patting her gently, or singing to her. Play soft music or soothing sounds. Offer a pacifier or let her suck her thumb to make her feel better.

## Believe in yourself and your child.

- Your child doesn't enjoy fussing and doesn't do it to annoy you.
- You're not a bad parent because your baby cries sometimes or your toddler has an occasional tantrum.
- Talk to your child's health care provider if he seems fussier than usual or he cannot be comforted. He may be ill, teething, or in need of other help.
- Make the best decisions you can for your child and stick with them. Let your toddler know you understand his frustration when he can't have or do what he wants, but don't let a tantrum change your "no" to a "yes." He needs to know you are in control.

 For more information on comforting a fussy baby, see the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eiclearinghouse.org>.

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Illinois  
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Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse  
Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Children's Research Center  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227 (Voice/TTY)  
Email: [Illinois-eic@illinois.edu](mailto:Illinois-eic@illinois.edu)

