


What do you say to the parent of a crying baby?

By Marilyn Barr

Many new parents and caregivers feel that a crying baby means they are doing something wrong. Understanding early infant crying, especially inconsolable crying, as a normal and healthy part of infancy can greatly reduce the stress in anyone who cares for a child.

Prevent SBS British Columbia is set to begin a province-wide prevention campaign for shaken baby syndrome called the **Period of PURPLE Crying®**. This program was developed by Ronald G. Barr, MDCM, FRCPC, and the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, USA.

From more than 25 years of research, Dr. Barr and other scientists have concluded that early infant crying, including inconsolable crying or colic is a normal part of early infant development. More recent research has also shown that the frustration over this early infant crying is the main trigger for shaken baby syndrome. This link provides the opportunity to educate parents about the normal characteristics of infant crying and the danger of shaking a baby. The prevention program will be implemented in maternity hospitals and community health units throughout B.C. The 10-minute DVD and 11-page booklet are to be distributed free of charge to all new parents during their hospital stay.

So, what can you tell a frustrated parent who comes to the emergency room? Let them know that it's okay to be frustrated with a crying baby. That it's not their fault, and they did the right thing to come and get their infant checked. That all babies cry and need to be comforted but, if a parent has done everything they can, it's always an option to put the baby down in a safe place and walk away for a few minutes to calm down. No baby has ever died from crying, but hundreds are injured every year when a caregiver gets frustrated and lashes out violently. Parents and caregivers need to know and understand the dangers of shaking a baby and how this abuse usually occurs out of frustration over early infant crying. If the baby is healthy and growing, then he/she is probably just going through the **Period of PURPLE Crying®**. It will come to an end and your baby will be fine, there is nothing you are doing wrong, or that your baby is doing wrong. It's just normal. 

About the author

Marilyn Barr is the Director of Prevent SBS British Columbia and also the Founder and Executive Director of the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, USA.



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