All babies are different, but they all cry.
Babies cry—we know this, parents know this but it helps to remind parents and more importantly to explain how to handle it. It is important to identify that crying, especially in the late afternoons and early evening, may increase during the first 6 to 8 weeks; two to three hours of crying a day in the first 3 months is considered normal. However, not all parents know this or are able tolerate it. Crying is a major trigger for most physical abuse and for death from physical abuse for infants and young children.

All parents can understand and relate to feelings that a crying baby evokes. Therefore, focusing on crying, and assessing the impact that it is having on the household is more universally appealing and is more likely to help prevent abuse than focusing on statements such as, “Don’t shake your baby,” which no parent believes they would ever do. Also, remind parents that responding to a crying infant by holding them will not result in an infant being "spoiled" or over coddled. Lastly, it’s important to encourage the caretakers during the visit that these messages need to be shared with all who care for their baby, including fathers.

GREEN LIGHT
These assessment questions and anticipatory guidance suggestions should be discussed with all parents, new or “experienced,” at the first visit and reinforced at the next few visits. The tools listed below can be used to help discuss the topic and reinforce the message.

Assessment
- Tell me about yourself and your baby.
- Who else cares for your baby?
- How often does your baby cry?
- How do you and your partner/caregiver deal with your baby when he/she is crying?
- What do you do if that doesn’t work?

Anticipatory Guidance
- Many babies have fussy times, especially in the late afternoon or evening. This is normal but can be frustrating. Here are some ways to calm your baby:
  - Swaddle the baby in a blanket
  - Gently rock the infant
  - Hold the infant calmly and without tightness
  - Take him for a walk or car ride
  - Lay him down in the crib with his pacifier.
A baby of this age is also learning to cope with the stimulation of daily activity, and may have difficulty settling after a busy day. Removing extra stimulation at bedtime (TV noise, loud conversation, siblings) and establishing a routine may help him quiet down and relax.

It is important to know that a young infant cannot be “spoiled” by holding, cuddling, and rocking him, or by talking and singing to him. Spending time playing and talking during quiet, alert states helps strengthen the parent-child relationship by building trust between you and your baby.

Listening to a crying baby can be frustrating so if you ever feel like you just want to shake the baby to make her stop, give her to someone else or put her in her crib and take a 5-10 min break, and most importantly call your pediatrician.

**YELLOW LIGHT**

Although all parents should understand that babies cry, some may need help figuring out why their infants are crying and, therefore, how best to cope with it. And others may have a harder time coping with the crying if they have stressors in their life and/or don’t have a support system. If during discussion of the above assessment questions, the parent seems frustrated or concerned, further assessment questions should be asked and additional guidance provided.

**Assessment**

- Why do you think your baby is crying? What happens when you can’t calm her?
- Who can you call to help you when you feel overwhelmed and need a break?
- Do you ever feel that you or your partner/caregiver will hurt the baby?

**Anticipatory Guidance**

- Discuss the infant’s cues for sleep and ways for parents to help the infant develop a regular sleep pattern. Note that infant irritability may be due to lack of sleep. Consider an intervention if the infant sleeps all the time, never sleeps, is irritable, is difficult to console, or is difficult to feed.
- Provide the parent/caregiver with suggested community resources that can provide help and someone to talk to when the parent/caregiver is feeling overwhelmed. Home visiting could also be encouraged. Also have a nurse or other staff place a call to the parent/caregiver a few days after the visit and/or schedule a follow-up appointment.

**RED LIGHT**

For those parents who present with such concerning behaviors and attitudes that the safety of the infant becomes a real issue to the health care provider, additional assessment and follow-up needs to be provided and a referral to Child Protective Services should be made.

**Assessment**

- How are you handling your baby’s crying?
- Have you thought about shaking the baby?

**Care Management**

- I am very concerned about the safety of your infant. I think that it would wise to put your infant in the hospital for observation and support.
  - Or
- I think that your family needs immediate help with your infant’s crying. Child Protective Services can provide a number of services and supports to ease the issues and to ensure that your child will be safe.
Welcome to the World of Parenting! Brochure

This brochure is the first in a series of brochures in the AAP program Connected Kids, which was designed to address violence prevention, “Welcome to the World of Parenting” provides parents with information about normal newborn behaviors and development, and the changes that they themselves will undergo. While some parents find great joy and support during this period, others find fatigue, disruption, criticism, and depression. In the extreme, this continues to be a peak age period for child abuse, and more commonly, for profound changes in the way the parents relate to each other as a couple. Use this as a tool to inform parents that crying is normal in babies, that crying upsets parents and that sometimes parents need to just let the baby cry. This brochure will inform new parents on some of the coping skills that they will need and acknowledges that all parents may lose it at some point.

Guide for Parents: Swaddling 101

Swaddling is one of many suggestions you can give to a parent who is having issues with calming a crying baby. This simple guide, which was adapted from the book The Happiest Baby on the Block, by Dr. Harvey Karp, answers questions about swaddling that parents may have.

Posters

The Coping with Crying poster, developed by the AAP Georgia Chapter and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, identifies that crying is normal and can be used to lead into a discussion about how to cope with it. The “Hug, Hold, Comfort, Cuddle” poster, developed by the Practicing Safety Project Advisory Committee, was designed to identify key activities to do with a baby to bond. Place these posters in either the waiting room, exam room or hallway so parents/caregivers can see them. They create an atmosphere where parents are comfortable bringing up the topic of crying and allows initiation of the discussion by you and your staff, if they do not bring it up.