



Operation Threshold WIC Nutrition/Health Tip of the Month 2014

Understanding Your Baby's Cues

If you are finding it hard to know what your baby needs... don't worry, babies have cues that show parents what they need! Many times babies will show cues before they start crying. Looking for and identifying these cues can make it easier for you to help your baby be calm and happy.

Hunger Cues Include:

- Make sucking noises
- Pucker his/her lips
- Keep his/her hands near mouth

“Near You” Cues are things your baby does to let you know he/she wants to be with you.

Some of these include:

- Stare at your face
- Root or make sucking motions
- Make feeding sounds
- Smile
- Have a relaxed face and body
- Follow your voice and face
- Raise his/her head

If you notice one of these cues, you should:

- Interact and play with your baby, this is the best time for a baby to learn, feed, and play.
- Keep in mind learning is hard work and babies can get tired very quickly.

“Need A Break” Cues are things your baby does to show that he/she needs a break from what he/she is doing or for something to be different. Some of these include:

- Turn or push away
- Stretch out fingers
- Have tense muscles in face or body
- Frown or have a glazed look
- Yawn

Crying is also a cue that your baby may need a break; however it usually comes after some of the other cues. Noticing cues quickly may prevent your baby from crying.

If you notice one of these cues, you should:

- Let your baby turn away and have a break. The quiet time will be good for both of you!
- Change the environment. Often times a lot of noise or crowds of people can be tiring for babies.
- Stop interactions. Sometimes even siblings can be too much for your baby to handle.

Keep in mind, ALL babies cry.

Below are some tips to help you cope with crying:

- Stay calm and be patient. It could take several minutes for baby to settle down.
- Use your baby's cues to try to identify what your baby is telling you.
- Hold your baby close to your body.
- Speak softly or sing over and over.
- Rock, sway, or bounce your baby gently over and over.
- Massage his back, arms, and legs gently.
- If you start to feel angry or overwhelmed, put the baby down in a safe place for a few minutes and take a break... NEVER SHAKE A BABY!
- Ask a friend or family member for help.
- Contact WIC or your doctor if you believe your baby is crying too much.