



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Crying in childhood

URL of this page: //medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002396.htm

Crying in childhood

Children cry for many reasons. Crying is an emotional response to a distressing experience or situation. The degree of a child's distress depends on the child's developmental level and past experiences. Children cry when they feel pain, fear, sadness, frustration, confusion, anger, and when they cannot express their feelings.

Crying is a normal response to upsetting situations that a child cannot resolve. When the child's coping skills are used up, crying is automatic and natural.

Over time, a child learns to express feelings of frustration, anger, or confusion without crying. Parents may need to set guidelines to help the child develop appropriate behaviors.

Praise the child for not crying until the right time and place. Teach other responses to distressing situations. Encourage children to use their words to explain what is upsetting them.

As children develop more coping and problem-solving skills, they will cry less often. As they mature, boys tend to cry less than girls. Many believe this difference between boys and girls is a learned behavior.

Temper tantrums are unpleasant and disruptive behaviors or emotional outbursts. They often occur in response to unmet needs or desires. Tantrums are more likely to occur in younger children or in children who cannot express their needs or control their emotions when they are frustrated.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics website. Top tips for surviving temper tantrums.
www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Temper-Tantrums.aspx [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Temper-Tantrums.aspx] . Updated April 21, 2021. Accessed April 29, 2024.

Chaves-Gnecco D, Feldman HM. Developmental/behavioral pediatrics. In: Zitelli BJ, McIntire SC, Nowalk AJ, Garrison J, eds. *Zitelli and Davis' Atlas of Pediatric Physical Diagnosis*. 8th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2023:chap 3.

Consolini DM. Crying. Merck Manual: Professional Version.
www.merckmanuals.com/professional/pediatrics/symptoms-in-infants-and-children/crying [https://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/pediatrics/symptoms-in-infants-and-children/crying] . Updated November 2022. Accessed April 29, 2024.

Review Date 4/17/2024

Updated by: Neil K. Kaneshiro, MD, MHA, Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, WA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

Learn how to cite this page



Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health