

Coos Health & Wellness

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Period of Purple Crying

Did you know that the number of hours an infant cries each day peaks when an infant is around 2-3 months of age? For some caregivers, this normal phase of infant development can be an intensely frustrating and anger-provoking period.

Sometimes, in the midst of all this frustration, a caregiver “just loses it” and shakes the infant. Shaking an infant can cause permanent harm including blindness, seizures, physical disabilities, learning problems, behavioral problems, and even death.

Fortunately, Shaken Baby Syndrome is 100% preventable.

Coos County Perinatal Task Force, in partnership with Coos Health & Wellness, wants parents, childcare providers, and the community at large to be prepared for this normal developmental phase and have some strategies to help caregivers through this sometimes frustrating stage.

The Period of PURPLE Crying, an evidenced-based prevention program developed by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, was developed to meet this need. The letters in the word PURPLE stand for the six features of crying in normal infants that contribute to a caregiver’s growing frustration and anger:

P stands for the Peak of crying where the amount of crying goes up and up, peaking around the second month of life, and declining by around 4-5 months of age.

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U stands for Unexpected. These crying episodes begin for no apparent reason and are not related to being hungry, hurt, having a dirty diaper, or any other known cause.

R stands for Resists soothing, when nothing a caregiver tries can calm the infant down.

The second **P** stands for the Pain-like facial expression that infants tend to have, even if they are not in pain. This tends to add to a caregiver's level of anxiety and frustration.

L stands for Long-Lasting. Crying episodes can average 35 minutes per bout and can go on for 1-2 hours (and in some cases up to 5-6 hours) each day, and

E stands for Evening. Oftentimes crying episodes occur in clusters in the evening, often when caregivers themselves are most tired and frustrated.

Caring for a crying infant can be overwhelming and frustrating. It's OK to feel this way. It's what you do when you get frustrated that's important.

First, make sure your infant's needs are met.

- Is she hungry?
- Tired?
- In need of a diaper change?
- Sick?

If she continues to cry, here are some suggestions you can try that may significantly reduce your infant's crying:

- Change your infant's position. If she's lying down, for example, try picking her up.
- Use movement. Put her in a sling or stroller and go for a walk! Alternatively, take her for a ride in the car.
- Try singing to him or let him hear your heart beat.
- Give her a warm bath.
- Hold him skin to skin.
- Give her something to suck on. Breastfeeding is the best soothing behavior!

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These soothing tips will work some of the time, but not all of the time. For best results, make these part of your infant's daily routine. Don't wait until your infant has already begun to cry to provide her with these experiences.

If these strategies aren't working this day, put her down in a safe place and walk away. Give yourself a few minutes to calm down. You will have better success calming your infant down when you're not feeling so frustrated. Take a few deep breaths and check on her in 10-15 minutes. You're not a failure for doing this. Tell yourself this is a normal phase of development and that your infant is going through the Period of PURPLE Crying. Remind yourself that this period will end when she is around 4-5 months of age and you and your infant will be fine.

If you are concerned about your baby's crying, it is important to have your doctor examine your infant to be sure she is all right. If she is growing, not sick, has no fever, or isn't hurt, then she is very likely going through the Period of PURPLE crying, something which will come to an end when she is about 4-5 months.

If your organization would like more information about the Period of PURPLE Crying, please contact Coos Health & Wellness at 541.751.2400. Our Perinatal Task Force members are available to provide free local trainings.

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