

ICON: Babies cry, you can cope

Press release

Coping with a crying baby

The 'stay at home' message during the Coronavirus Pandemic could not be more clear. The restrictions that we are all facing are already presenting major stressors for families which they cannot control:

- Loss of income
- Self isolation with children and potentially at risk adults
- Social distancing/lockdown restrictions on activities which might lessen stress (e.g. sports, social engagement and entertainment, celebrations)
- Social distancing restrictions on activities which might enhance support and coping (e.g. support groups, children/baby groups and classes, baby clinics).
- Limitation of entertainment such as sporting events on TV which might also lessen stress.

Add into the mix a crying baby and it could all get too much for some parents and carers.

During these difficult and worrying times, *ICON: Babies cry, you can cope* is helping parents, carers and families understand that increased crying between 2 weeks and 6-8 weeks of age is normal and helps families cope with a crying baby. It also raises awareness of the dangers of a baby being shaken, something that can be triggered by a baby crying, and the devastating injuries this can cause sometimes resulting in death.

The *ICON* programme was conceived following years of study and research into the prevention of Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) and draws on successful programmes that run in Canada and USA.

Dr Suzanne Smith, *ICON* founder, explained: “With everything that is going on at the moment it is important we don’t forget parents and carers of young babies and the additional strain they might be under. It’s normal for parents to get stressed, especially by crying. A baby’s cry can be upsetting and frustrating. It is designed to get your attention and you may be worried that something is wrong with your baby. If you find yourself in this situation it is really important that you put some time aside for yourself and take care of your needs as well as your baby’s to help you cope. Also, don’t be afraid to ask for help – support is out there.”

ICON is an evidenced based programme consisting of a series of brief ‘touchpoint’ interventions that reinforce the simple message making up the *ICON* acronym of:

I – Infant crying is normal - and it will stop! Babies start to cry more frequently from around two weeks of age with a peak at around two months of age. Not being able to stop your baby crying at this age does not make you a bad parent!

C –Comforting methods can help – sometimes just by soothing the baby can make the crying stop. After checking that the baby is not ill, run through some other basic checks e.g. are they hungry? Do they need a nappy change? Are they too hot or too cold? Some soothing techniques might be holding the baby skin to skin, singing/humming to the baby, let them hear a repeated or soothing sound, take them out for a walk – if this is difficult because of lockdown arrangements, walking around the house or the garden can have the same effect

O – It's okay to walk away - if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you. After a few minutes when you are feeling calm, go back and check on the baby. Think about what will help you calm down – listening to music, having a cuppa, deep breathing, maybe call someone to offload.

N – Never, ever shake a baby - it can cause lasting brain damage and death.

People are also urged to speak to someone if you need support such as your family, friends, Midwife, GP or Health Visitor.

The ICON website iconcope.org has further advice and resources for both parents and health professionals.

Don't forget, if you are worried that your baby may be unwell, contact your GP, Health Visitor, Midwife or NHS 111 for further advice.