

Baby Talk: Smiling, Coosing, Crying – What It All Means

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You and your baby will find your own communication; and smiles, coos and cries will all be a part of it. By learning to enjoy the different cues along the way, before you know it, your baby will be talking!

Smiling...

Smiling is one of the most exciting and important things that a baby does. In fact, your baby's smile is so powerful that there are actual parts of your brain that light up when you see it. Your baby begins smiling almost from birth, but it isn't until around six to eight weeks that their "social smile" occurs. Here are a few things to know about smiling...

- **Keep a House Full of Smiles:** Create a warm and happy atmosphere in your home. It's been found that when babies enjoy themselves, they take in much more through their senses. Relaxing and responding to your baby's delighted squeals with smiles and your laughter can help you bond with your child in their early years.
- **"Feel Better" Smiles:** When you notice your child's mood change or something seems "off" trust your mom radar! If their smile starts to fade, many moms start to worry that the dreaded fever or flu is on the way. If you are seeing symptoms of fever and pain, consult your pediatrician and discuss the possibility of giving your child a pain reliever or fever reducer like Infants' **TYLENOL**® to help relieve their symptoms. If you see that smile that screams, "I feel better!" – it's a great indicator your baby is on the mend.
- **Developmental Smiles:** If your baby is not smiling back at you by 2 or 3 months of age, it may be time to have a discussion with your pediatrician. Just remember that this alone is not necessarily a sign of anything related to your child's progress, since all babies grow and develop at different rates.

Cooing...

Cooing is your baby's way of finding their voice. Babies typically begin cooing around the second month, but this can vary with every child. Cooing is a combination of laughter and vowel sounds, and typically lets you know your baby is happy and content. Coos actually engage different mouth muscles. You can keep your baby cooing by...

- **Vocalizing:** Encourage your baby's vocalization by smiling, talking and making silly faces and sounds with them.
- **Exaggerating:** Use "parentese" or "baby talk" when communicating. This may sound silly to us grownups, but it's great for your baby's development. Research shows that babies respond well to shorter sentences, smaller words, and exaggerated tones and gestures.
- **Reading:** It's never too early to start looking at books and reading with your baby. Set aside time every day to read. Your baby will enjoy seeing your facial expressions and smiles.

Crying...

For new moms, a baby's cry can be scary. But, it's important to remember that crying is an important way for your baby to communicate. On average, newborns cry up to two hours a day, and during the first few months, they may cry even more. But don't stress! As you bond with your child, you'll learn to distinguish between different cries and what they all mean. Here are some tips on the best way to handle things when your little one is shedding some tears...

- **The Five "S's":** This approach to calming your crying baby was developed by Dr. Harvey Karp. Swaddling, shushing, swinging, sucking and side/stomach positioning (when your baby is awake) are all beneficial. Another "S" I like to add is singing, which can be coupled with dancing together or going out for a walk.
- **Excessive Crying:** If your baby's crying is high pitched, constant, or inconsolable, it can be a sign of illness. It's important to have a thermometer on hand to check for fever. If your baby is under 3 months of age and has a fever, always call your pediatrician or go to the Emergency Room because a newborn can get sick very quickly and should be evaluated by a medical professional. For older infants, consult your pediatrician to determine if they are in need of a medication such as Infants' **TYLENOL**®. If your baby continues to cry, call your pediatrician.

