# Coping with a crying toddler

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Just like babies, toddlers cry because they’re hungry, tired, uncomfortable or need your attention. Once your toddler can talk, it will be much easier for them to tell you why they’re upset and what they need.

As your child gets older they will also start to develop more control over their crying.

### Tips to manage your toddler’s crying

* **Check they’re not unwell or in pain.** If they have a high temperature, they may have an illness.  If you think there’s something wrong ring [**NHS Direct Wales**](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/) (External link) for advice. You can call them on 0845 46 47. If you don't see any signs of illness a headache or earache could cause them to cry.
* **Try to work out why your toddler is crying**. Are they hungry or tired? A snack, some quiet time or a rest might help.
* **Is your child worried or anxious about something?** Your child may be worried or anxious about going to nursery, moving house or a new baby. Crying is their way of expressing their anxiety. Give your child lots of reassurance with love and cuddles.
* **Try taking your toddler out** for a walk, to the park or join a parent and toddler group. A change of scenery can help. Meeting up with other Mums and Dads may also help remind you that you're not alone. Your Family Information Service will be able to tell you what’s on in your area. You can contact them by telephone on 0300 123 7777. The [**Family Point website**](https://familypoint.cymru/) (External link) also has information on services and activities in your area.
* **Let your toddler help feed and dress themselves and offer some choices.** Toddlers crave independence.  They may get angry and tearful if they are never given any choice or control. You can offer simple choices like "Do you want to play with your blocks or draw a picture?" or "Would you like an apple or a banana?"
* **Avoid giving in to your toddler when they want something you don’t want them to have.** This may lead to more crying next time and might lead to a pattern of behaviour that can be hard to change later.
* **Talk about and acknowledge their feelings.** “I know you must be upset, because you wanted to play outside.  I know that can be frustrating”. If your child can describe how they feel with words, it can help them understand and manage their feelings.
* **Try distraction.** Try distracting your toddler with a toy or play activity or point out something interesting, like a cat in the garden.  “Come on, let’s play something together. Would you like to get your crayons out or read a book.”
* **Stay calm.** If you get stressed you may make the crying worse.

**Never shake, hit or hurt a crying child.** If it is getting too much for you, put your toddler in a safe place (e.g. their cot) and leave the room for a bit until you feel calmer. Or ask a friend or family member to care for your toddler for a while so you can have time to yourself.

It may also help to talk things over. [**Family Lives**](http://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/) (External link) offers a confidential and free (from landlines and most mobiles) helpline (previously known as Parentline). You can call on 0808 800 2222 for information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life. The (English language) helpline is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday.