

COLIC
Patient Information Sheet

Colic in infants is a behavioral pattern of excess crying that affects a small number of babies. It usually starts at 2-3 weeks of age and resolves by 3 months of age. The crying may last 3 hours or more, often increasing in late afternoon or evening, usually occurring at a similar time each day or most days. There is no known cause for colic, although many possibilities have been suggested. These include overstimulation, under stimulation, transient hormonal imbalance, cow's milk allergy and an immature gastrointestinal tract. Colic occurs in both breast and bottle fed babies. It is not due to over anxious parents or inadequate nurturing.

If you have a fussy baby, check for other problems before assuming he/she has colic. See whether he/she needs a diaper change, needs to be fed or burped, and wants to be held or soothed. Check also for signs of infection such as a fever. You may need to visit the doctor to make sure that nothing else is wrong. Keep in mind that normal babies cry 2-3 hours a day for the first 2 months of life.

A number of soothing methods have been tried for colic. Usually one or more of these will provide at least temporary relief. Try the following (give each a try for 5 minutes, and then move on to the next idea if the baby is still crying):

1. Hold the baby and walk.
2. Lay the baby on his/her back and gently bicycle his/her legs.
3. Swaddle the baby.
4. Use a "snuggly" or other carry-pack.
5. Play a tape of "white noise", such as a vacuum cleaner.
6. Put the baby in an infant swing.
7. Go for a ride in the car. (A car simulator is even available to attach to the crib.)
8. Place the infant in a dark, quiet room to minimize stimulation.

Occasionally, changing formula or avoiding certain foods if breast feeding may help. Talk to your pediatrician about this. You may try simethicone drops (Mylicon) if the baby seems gassy.

Colic is a very stressful problem for any parent to endure. Keep in mind that you are not alone and you are not responsible for causing it. Symptoms will go away by 3 months, and colic won't cause permanent harm to the baby. Get as much sleep as you can, get plenty of support from friends and relatives, and remember that easier days are ahead.