

# **COLIC**

## **Learning How to Deal with Your Baby's Crying**

### **How does a baby with colic act?**

Babies with colic cry more than most babies--a lot more. When they cry, they may draw their arms and legs toward their bodies and may seem like they're in pain. Sometimes they stretch out their arms and legs and stiffen, then draw up again. They may even turn bright red from crying. When this crying lasts for more than three hours a day, it's called colic. Colicky babies usually get fussy toward the end of the day, but colic can happen at any time.

A baby with colic may cry in bouts or may cry almost all of the time. When your baby cries, he or she may swallow air. This may give your baby gas and make your baby's tummy look swollen and feel tight, which may make him or her even more uncomfortable.

### **What causes colic?**

No one is sure what causes colic. Babies with colic are healthy, so it's not caused by a medical problem. Colic isn't caused by the way the baby is handled or treated. It's certainly not the parents' fault. Colic may be caused by stomach pain or the baby's temperament. Babies with colic seem to need more attention and are more sensitive to the things around them than other babies.

### **How long will the colic last?**

Colic usually starts between the 3rd and 6th week after birth. It usually goes away when the baby is 3 months old. If your baby is still colicky after 3 months of age, he or she may be experiencing a reflux disorder.

### **Things to remember about colic?**

- You didn't cause the colic, so try not to feel guilty.
- Colic almost always goes away by 3 months of age. It should go away by the time your baby is 6 months old.
- You can try many things to soothe your baby (see below).
- Giving your baby extra attention won't "spoil" him or her.
- Just because your baby has colic doesn't mean he or she is unhealthy.

## **What can I do to help my baby stop crying?**

You can try a number of things to soothe your baby. These may include changing the way you feed or hold your baby. Try the tips listed in the box below to see if they help your baby stop crying.

- Place a warm water bottle on your baby's stomach (make sure it's not too hot).
- Rock your baby in a rocking chair or cradle.
- Put your baby in a wind-up swing (make sure your baby can support his or her head).
- Give your baby a warm bath.
- Give your baby a pacifier.
- Gently rub your baby's stomach.
- Wrap your baby in a soft blanket.
- Put your baby in a stroller and go for a walk.
- Go for a drive with your baby in the car seat.

## **What changes in feeding may help my baby stop crying?**

Try feeding your baby if more than 2 hours have passed since the last feeding. Feed your baby more often and less at a time. If you feed your baby formula, your family doctor might suggest trying a different one. Warming the formula to body temperature before a feeding may also help. Try using a nipple with a smaller hole on the bottle if a bottle feeding takes less than 20 minutes. Avoid feeding your baby too quickly.

## **What about how I hold my baby?**

Sometimes babies with colic will respond to different ways of being held or rocked.

- Hold your baby across your lap and massage his or her back.
- Hold your baby on top of a running dishwasher, washing machine or dryer (don't leave your baby alone).
- Hold your baby upright. This will help if your baby has gas.
- Hold your baby while walking.

## **What can I do when I feel frustrated with my baby?**

Colic can be very frustrating for parents. Babies who don't stop crying can be hard to care for. Any time you feel tired and frustrated, get someone else to watch your baby for a while. If you can't find anyone to help you, try going into a nearby room and watching TV or listening to the radio. Make sure your baby will be safe without immediate supervision. Crying will not hurt your baby. Be sure you give yourself time away from your baby so you don't get too frustrated.

## **When do I call my Healthcare Provider?**

- Your baby's cry changes from a fussy one to a painful one.
- Your baby stops gaining weight.
- Your baby has a fever.
- You're afraid you might hurt your baby.

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