

Colic

Learning how to deal with your baby's crying

How does a baby with colic act?

They 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.

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.

What causes colic?

No one is sure what causes colic. But we do know it's not the parents' fault. Colic isn't caused by the way the baby is handled or treated. It may be caused by stomach pain. 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 second and sixth week after birth. It almost always goes away by the time the baby is six months old.

Things to remember about colic

- You didn't cause the colic, so try not to feel guilty.
- Colic almost always goes away by six months of age.
- You can try many things to soothe your baby.
- 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?

Babies who have colic may stop crying in response to a number of different things you do. These things include changes in the way you feed your baby and changes in the way you hold your baby. You can also try any of the things listed in the box below to see if they help your baby stop crying.

What changes in feeding may help my baby stop crying?

Try any of the things listed below when you feed your baby to see if they help him or her stop having colic.

- Try feeding your baby if more than two hours have passed since the last feeding.
- If you feed your baby a formula, your family doctor might suggest trying a different one. Sometimes switching to a hydrolyzed protein formula can help stop colic or at least make it better.
- 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 and your baby seems to like sucking.
- Try feeding your baby more often but less at a time.
- Burp your baby after feedings.

Tips on soothing your baby

- 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 use a cradle.
- Put your baby in a wind-up swing.
- 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 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.
- Hold your baby while walking.

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

Colic can be very hard for parents to handle. Babies who don't stop crying can be frustrating 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 another room and watching TV or listening to the radio. Crying will not hurt your baby. Be sure you give yourself time away from your baby so you don't get too frustrated.



Call your family doctor if

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

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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