



# Colic

Babies cry when they are hungry, sick, too hot, etc.

A baby with colic cries for no apparent reason, often for 3 or more hours a day. In general, babies start to have colic when they are about three weeks old. The colic worsens at around 6 weeks of age and stops by 3-4 months of age. Colic does not harm babies, but is very hard on parents and caretakers.



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Fussy crying occurs for no known reason. The baby is not hungry, sick, in pain, etc. The crying lasts for minutes to hours at a time.
- The baby may pull their knees up to their stomach, clench their fists, or arch their back.
- Colic episodes often occur in the evening.
- When the baby is exhausted or passes gas or stool, the crying tends to stop.

## CAUSES

The exact cause is not known. Babies with colic are very, very sensitive to stimulation. Some noises in the house bother them. Also, they may need to be cuddled more than babies without colic.

Bottle feeding too fast (less than 20 minutes) or giving too much formula can trigger colic episodes. So can foods the breastfeeding mother eats (e.g., caffeine, dairy products, and nuts).

## TREATMENT

After other medical problems are ruled out, colic is treated by finding out and getting rid of colic triggers and giving comfort to the baby.



## TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do any of these problems occur?

- It is hard to rouse or wake up the baby.
- The baby stares off into space.
- The baby is not normally active or acts very sick.
- The baby has been shaken.
- An infant younger than 3 months old has a temperature of 100.4°F or higher?

**NO**  
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**YES** ► **GET MEDICAL CARE FAST**



With colic, does a baby younger than 3 months old have a temperature between 99.5°F and up to 100.4°F? Or, do you feel out of control and are you tempted to hurt the baby?

**NO**  
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**YES** ► **SEE DOCTOR**



With colic, does the infant have any of these problems?

- Vomiting, diarrhea, or black or bloody stool
- Passing no stool for more than 2 days
- Weight loss

**NO**  
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**YES** ► **SEE DOCTOR**



Are any of these conditions present?

- The baby with colic is younger than 2 weeks old or older than 3 months old.
- Colic episodes last more than 2 hours at a time.
- The baby with colic is taking a prescribed medicine.
- You are exhausted from the baby's crying and/or can't handle it anymore.

**NO**  
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**YES** ► **SEE DOCTOR**



**USE SELF-CARE**



## SELF-CARE

- Be sure the baby has enough to eat. For breastfed babies, feed if more than 1-1/2 hours since the last feeding. For bottlefed babies, feed if more than 2 hours since the last feeding.
- Try different bottle nipples.
- Don't allow smoking in your home.
- Do not give fruit juice (e.g., apple juice, pear juice) to infants younger than 6 months old.
- Hold the baby up for feeding.
- Burp the baby after each ounce of formula or every few minutes when breastfeeding.
- Use a pacifier, but never put a pacifier on a string around the baby's neck.
- Give the baby a warm bath and a massage.
- Wrap or swaddle the baby snugly in a soft blanket using the "burrito-wrap" technique. Rock them or use a baby swing.
- Play soft, gentle music. Take your baby for a stroller or car ride.
- Try the "colic carry." Lay the baby on their stomach across your arm. Put the baby's face in your hand and let the legs straddle your inner elbow. Hold the baby's back with your other hand so they won't fall. Walk around like this for awhile.
- Run the dryer or dishwasher. Buckle your baby in a baby seat. Lean the seat against the side of the dryer or on the counter near the dishwasher. The sounds from these machines may help the baby fall asleep. Stay with your baby. Make sure the heat or steam won't hurt the baby.
- Try playing other low-pitched white noise apps or devices.
- Don't give the baby antacids or simethicone drops unless a doctor tells you to.
- Let your baby cry to sleep if nothing else helps and your baby has been fed within 2 hours. Do call the doctor if the baby cries for more than 2 hours without stopping.