

Colic (The Crying Baby)

I. Definition

- A. Diagnostic findings of fussy crying (colic):
- Unexplained crying
 - Intermittent crying one or two times per day
 - Healthy child (no sickness or source of pain)
 - Well-fed child (not hungry)
 - Bouts of crying usually last one or two hours
 - Child acts fine between bouts of crying
 - Child is usually consolable when held
 - Onset usually under two weeks of age (crying that begins after one month of age is not colic)
 - Usually stops by three months of age
- B. Cause: About 10% of babies have colic. No one is sure of what causes colic, but it is harmless and tends to occur in babies with a sensitive temperament and a below-average need for sleep. Colic is not the result of bad parenting, so don't blame yourself. Cow's milk allergy may cause crying in a few babies. However, cow's milk allergy is a possible cause of colic only if a baby also has diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- C. Expected course: Colic spontaneously resolves itself in two to three months. Suddenly your baby will stop having trouble getting to sleep.

II. Home Care

- A. Gentle, rhythmic activities: A soothing, rhythmic activity is the best approach to helping a baby relax and go to sleep. One can't spoil a baby during the first four months. Consider using the following:
- Cuddling your child in a rocking chair
 - Rocking your child in a cradle
 - Placing your child in a frontpack or pouch which frees your hands for housework
 - A wind-up swing
 - A stroller (buggy ride)
 - Anything else you think may be helpful (for example, a pacifier or warm bath).

If all else fails, Sleep Tight is a new device that attaches under the crib and simulates the motion and sound of a moving car. This gadget has lessened colicky behavior in over 90% of babies. It costs about \$60. For more information call 1-800-662-6542.

- B. Diet: Don't feed your baby every time he cries. Being hungry is only one of the reasons babies cry. It takes more than two hours for the stomach to empty, so wait at least that long between feedings or you may cause cramps from bloating. If you are breast-feeding, avoid drinking or taking coffee, tea, colas, and other stimulants. If you suspect that your child is allergic to cow's milk, try a soy formula for three days (or, if you are breast-feeding, avoid all forms of cow's milk in your diet). If the crying dramatically improves when your child is on the soy formula, call us for additional advice.

Inserting a thermometer or suppository into the rectum to "release gas" does nothing except irritate the anal sphincter.

Stay with TLC (tender loving care) for a cure.

III. Call Our Office:

A. IMMEDIATELY if:

- It becomes a painful cry rather than a fussy one.
- The cry becomes high-pitched.
- Your baby cries constantly for more than three hours.
- Your baby is less than two months old and acts sick.
- You are afraid you might hurt your baby.

B. During office hours if:

- You can't find a way to soothe your baby.
- Your baby is over three months old.
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or constipation occurs with the crying.
- You are exhausted from all the crying.
- The baby mainly cries when you're trying to sleep.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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- C. Sleep: Try to keep your child from sleeping excessively during the daytime. If your baby has napped three hours, gently awaken and play with or feed your baby, depending on his needs. This will help to cut down the amount of time your baby is awake at night.
- D. Rest and help for the mother: Avoid fatigue and exhaustion. Get at least one nap a day, in case the night goes badly. Ask your husband, a friend, or a relative for help with other children and chores. Caring for a colicky baby is a two-person job. Hire a babysitter so you can get out of the house and clear your mind. Talk to someone every day about your mixed feelings. The screaming would upset a saint.
- E. Last resort: If none of these measures quiet your baby and he has been fed in the last 2½ hours, let your baby cry himself to sleep. On some days, this is the only answer for a fussy baby. Close the door, go into a different room, turn up the radio, and do something you want to do.
- F. The prevention of later sleep problems: Although babies need to be held when they are crying, they don't need to be held all the time. If you rock your baby every time he goes to sleep, you will become indispensable to your baby's sleep process. Your baby's colic won't stop at three months of age. To prevent this from occurring, when your baby is drowsy but not crying, place him in the crib and let him learn to comfort himself and go to sleep by himself. Don't rock or nurse him to sleep at these times. While colic can't be prevented, secondary sleep problems can be.
- G. Common mistakes: If you are breast-feeding, don't stop. If your baby needs extra calories, talk with a lactation nurse or specialist about ways to increase your milk supply. If your child also has diarrhea, vomiting, eczema, wheezing, or a family history of milk allergy, he may be allergic to cow's milk in your diet. Avoid drinking or eating any forms of cow's milk for one week to see if your baby's condition improves.

If you are feeding your baby formula and in addition to colic he has diarrhea, vomiting, eczema, wheezing, or a family history of milk allergy, he may be allergic to cow's milk. Try a soy formula for one week. Soy formulas are nutritionally complete and no more expensive than regular formula. If your baby's condition dramatically improves when he is on the soy formula, call us for additional advice about keeping him on the formula. Also, if you think your child is allergic, but soy formula doesn't seem to help him feel better, call us about the elemental formulas.

The available medicines are ineffective and many (especially those containing phenobarbital) are dangerous for children of this age. The medicines that slow intestinal motion (the anticholinergics) can cause fever or constipation.

Don't place your baby face down on a water bed or lamb's wool rug. While these surfaces can be soothing, they also run the risk of suffocation and crib death. A young infant may not be able to lift the head adequately to breathe.