

COLIC

Colic is excessive unexplained crying in infants. It usually begins at 2 to 4 weeks of age and ends at 3 to 4 months of age. Most colicky crying occurs in the afternoon and evening. Episodes last 1 to 2 hours and the baby seems fine between crying bouts.

Since crying is your child's only means of expression, it signals many different needs. He may be too hungry, too full, wet, soiled, hot, cold, over-stimulated, etc. Babies with colic may be temperamentally sensitive and cry even when all their needs are met.

Babies with colic are often described as "gassy." During crying all babies tense their abdominal muscles and swallow extra air. Therefore, the gas is usually the result rather than the cause of colic. Food intolerance is unlikely if there is no vomiting or diarrhea. A growth assessment and thorough physical examination should be done to be sure there is no medical problem causing the colic.

Although it may be frustrating and exasperating for you, colicky crying is not dangerous to your baby. The following suggestions may help decrease colic:

- Hold your baby as much as possible.
- Repetitive rhythmic motion is soothing.
- Baby swings and car rides may help
- Sucking can be soothing.
- Feed your baby every 2 to 4 hours. If you suspect intolerance to cows milk based formula, try a hypo-allergenic formula for 3 to 5 days. If breastfeeding, eliminate milk products from your diet for a few days and avoid caffeine or stimulant medications. If your baby is gaining weight, the crying is not a signal of insufficient breast milk, so don't stop breastfeeding!
- Anti-gas drops such as Mylicon occasionally help a bit but are usually not a solution for colic.
- We do not recommend drugs to calm colicky babies. If after all your soothing your baby is still crying, he may be overstimulated and need sleep. Reduce stimulation and place him in his crib.
- Take a break for yourself! Caring for a colicky baby is very demanding and exhausting, and relief for parents from time-to-time is essential. Get a babysitter, nap when the baby naps, and take care of yourself. If your frustrations are reaching a climax, call for help.

REMEMBER, COLIC IS TEMPORARY!

T:HPA Handouts/Colic
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