

COLIC

What is colic?

Colic means spasm or painful tightening of muscles. It is thought that infant "colic" is due to spasmodic pain coming from the baby's bowel (tummy). It is not known why this seems to occur more frequently late in the afternoon/early evening.

What are the symptoms of colic?

The most common features of colic are:

- ❑ Baby cries for some hours, more commonly at the end of the day.
- ❑ At this time the baby is hard to comfort and settle.
- ❑ The crying occurs in waves with the baby quiet for a short period followed by crying.
- ❑ Baby may draw their knees up or arch backwards with legs out stiff.

Other than these episodes the baby is well and growing normally.

Fortunately the symptoms of colic generally resolve by 3-4 months of age.

If your baby is unsettled at other times of the day this may not be colic but gastroesophageal reflux.

How can you settle your baby?

Check with your doctor that your baby is otherwise well and that he/she agrees that your baby has colic.

Prepare for the period of time that your baby is unsettled by having the evening meal prepared early so that you can focus on settling and comforting your baby without distraction.

Having another person around to help settle and comfort your baby during this time is also valuable.

Wrapping and rocking your baby may provide some comfort and relief for your baby.

A warm bath and massage at this time of the day may also settle and comfort your baby.

Sometimes taking your baby for a walk in the pram at this time is helpful.

Prolonged crying can be distressing for you and if this happens it is important to take a break. Give your baby to someone else or put them down somewhere safe and take a break. Relax for a few minutes then refreshed go back to your baby.

Can medication help?

There are a number of medications on the market that are advertised to help colic. However, it is not certain whether any of these medications are useful.

Colic eventually gets better on its own whether medication is used or not.

If you decide to use medications, ensure that you carefully read the instructions and use only as directed. Use medications only after your baby has been checked by your doctor.

The majority of medications used for colic do not appear to harm babies, but there is no evidence from research that they are of benefit.

Does changing your diet or your baby's formula help?

Breast feeding mother's often worry that something they are eating may be the cause of colic, but it is rarely the case.

Some baby's may improve when breast feeding mother's remove cow's milk and dairy products from their diet or if your baby is formula fed using a cow's milk protein free formula. This should be done with advice from your doctor.

Reducing the amount of caffeine in your diet if you are breast feeding may be helpful (coffee, tea, soft drinks such as Cola's).

There is a lot of information about probiotics in the media and whether the correct balance of "good bacteria" may be beneficial. Breast fed babies would normally be expected to have normal amounts of "good bacteria" such as Lactobacillus acidophilus. There is no evidence that giving acidophilus powder to breast fed or bottle fed infants will help them to be more settled. There is likely to be no harm if you choose to use these products but they should only be used in the recommended amount and mixed with cooled boiled water.