

# INFANT COLIC

All babies cry some of the time. It's their way of telling you something - they're hungry, they want to be held, or are uncomfortable.

It is difficult and tiring trying to cope with a baby who cries a lot but it helps to know that if it is colic, it will usually

stop by about three months and there will be no long term effects on the baby. It also helps to know that if your baby has colic you are not alone - it has been suggested that up to one quarter of all babies have colic at some time.



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

A baby with colic cries for hours a day, usually in the late afternoon or evening. The baby pulls its legs up, clenches its fists, screams and turns red as if in pain. None of the usual methods (picking up baby, feeding, changing nappy) seem to comfort the child.

## WHAT CAUSES COLIC?

No one really knows for sure what causes infant colic.

There is probably more than one cause, including:

- pain due to spasms of the intestine or due to wind
- baby's intestines have not yet fully matured
- baby is anxious or
- baby senses the parent's worry.

- allergy to certain foods (taken by baby or mother)
- There may be a link between parents' smoking and colic.

## COMMON CAUSES OF CRYING

- wet nappy or nappy rash (see *Nappy Rash* Fact Card)
- hunger
- need to suck
- need to be cuddled
- overtired
- too hot or too cold
- wind (see **SELF CARE**)
- colic

## IMPORTANT

See your doctor if your baby also has:

- blood in their bowel motions
- blood or green tinged bile in their vomit
- loss of appetite
- woken up over and over in the night, screaming with pain not related to feeding
- vomiting and/or diarrhoea, getting worse or that has lasted for more than 24 hours (see *Vomiting & Diarrhoea* Fact Card)
- constipation
- changed from being alert when awake, to being sluggish
- severe, long lasting swelling of the belly
- a high temperature

## SELF CARE

### Relieving Wind

Air may be swallowed when your baby is crying or if your milk flow is too fast or too slow. Wind can be reduced by burping your baby after a feed.

If milk flow is too fast -

- if breast fed – posture feed (feeding with baby lying on your stomach so baby has to suck up), especially with morning feed
- if bottle fed – get smaller holed teat or try a narrow neck bottle.

If milk flow is too slow, check how baby is sucking or try a larger holed teat.

### Relax and calm baby with:

- movement – rocking, walking with your baby in a sling, driving in the car, riding in a pram
- music – something with a definite beat
- a warm bath
- gentle massage of tummy, shoulders
- sounds such as vacuum cleaner or fan.

If colic occurs at a regular time it may help to use these ideas to relax your baby **before** the time colic normally begins.

### Take care of yourself:

- be patient – colic will probably stop when your baby is about 3 months old
- prepare for evening colic – have a nap during the day.

- take a break – ask a relative or friend to look after your baby for an evening.
- share the caring, housework, cooking etc.
- make feeding time quiet and relaxed.
- keep the Nursing Mothers Association phone number handy.
- relax – see *Relaxation Techniques* Fact Card.
- remember that you are not to blame.
- smoking near your baby can make colic worse.

If you feel very frustrated, maybe even to the point of shaking your baby, put your baby down in the cot and leave the room until the feeling goes – we all need time-out sometimes.

## MEDICINES

The most effective ways to treat colic have already been mentioned in SELF CARE.

Some medicines may also help

- Products with simethicone make air bubbles in the stomach and intestines smaller so they escape more easily. These may help if your baby has wind.
- Gripe water also helps baby burp.

Your pharmacist may also have other suggestions.

Your Self Care pharmacist

### Recommended Reading:

The Tresillian Guide  
*How to stay sane in baby's first year*  
Simon and Schuster, 1996

### WILTON L

*Your baby - the first 12 months*  
Gore & Osment, 1994

### Other relevant Fact Cards:

- *Nappy Rash*
- *Vomiting & Diarrhoea*
- *Relaxation Techniques*

### Contact:

Your general practitioner (listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book).

Your local Nursing Mothers Association (listed under 'N' in the white pages of the phone book).

Your Self Care pharmacist  
To find:

ACT	(06)	281 1366
NSW	(02)	9437 5941
QLD	(07)	3844 4900
SA	(08)	8272 1211
TAS	(03)	6231 2636
VIC	(03)	9903 9600
WA	(08)	9481 3225

In case of poisoning, phone the Poisons Information Centre on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia



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Pharmacists are medicines experts.  
Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

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