

What Causes Colic?

We don't know for sure, but babies may cry because . . .

- ◆ Gases passing through the baby's stomach cause pain.
- ◆ Painful cramps occur because of changes in hormones after birth.
- ◆ The baby is too stimulated by the outside world. A colicky baby may not be able to "ignore" sights and sounds.
- ◆ The baby cries to release tension.
- ◆ The baby cannot stop unwanted behaviors, such as crying.
- ◆ Parents don't yet know ways to calm the baby.

Tips for Remedy and Relief

There is no cure for colic, but there are some things you can do to comfort a fussy baby. To help baby cry less, follow these tips:

- Feed just the right amount—not too much, not too little. Babies who cry after eating may want to suck rather than eat more, or they may need to cry a little as they fall asleep. Talk with your doctor if you aren't sure if your baby is eating enough.
- Give the baby things to look at or listen to earlier in the day. To keep baby calm, avoid active play late in the day.

- Change the baby's position. If you are holding the baby, put her down and let her kick. If the baby is lying down, pick him up and talk to him.
- Handle baby gently. Don't shake or move the baby roughly.

Try these ideas, too:

- Hold your baby in your arms. Keep his arms close to his body. Walk or rock the baby gently, while talking to him softly. Remember, be gentle! Shaking or bouncing too roughly can hurt your baby, or even cause death.
- Sit and hold your baby face down, with your hand under her tummy. Slowly rock your legs back and forth, or lift them gently up and down.
- Lie on your back and lay your baby on top of you with his tummy down. Massage or pat his back slowly and gently.

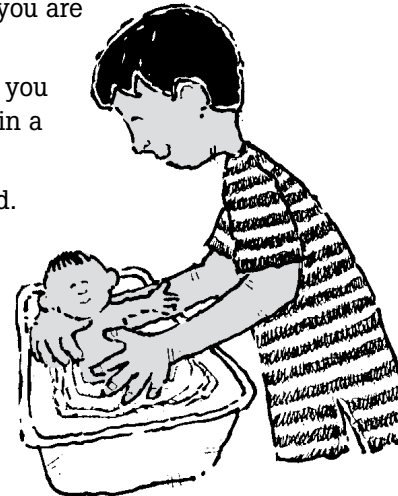
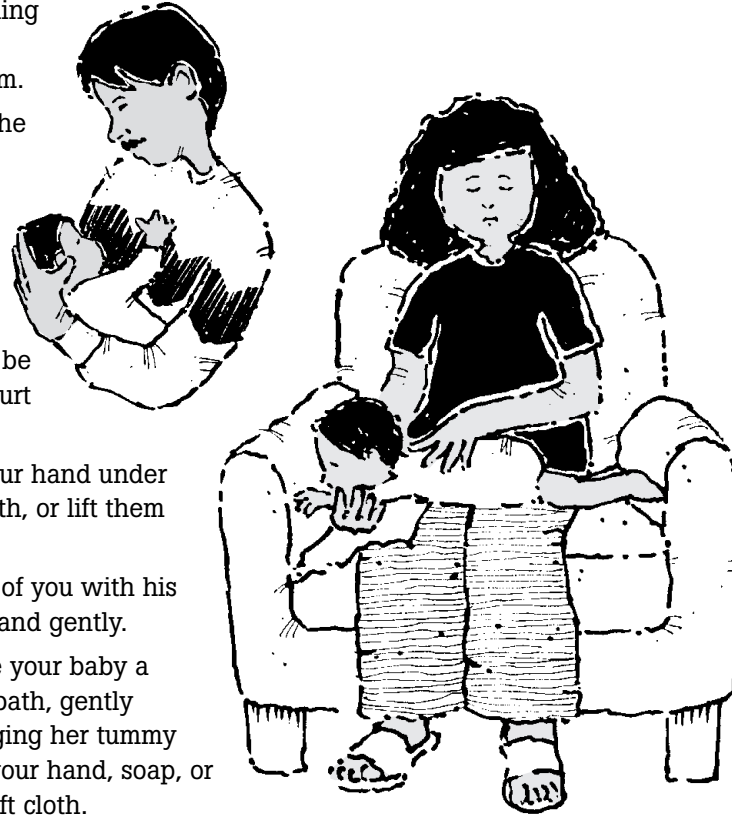


- Give your baby a warm bath, gently massaging her tummy with your hand, soap, or a soft cloth.
- Turn on a radio, vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, clothes dryer, or water faucet. Some babies are calmed by steady sounds and noises.
- Offer your baby a pacifier (again, remember to be gentle—you can injure the baby's mouth if you are too rough).
- Take your baby for a ride. If you use a car, be sure to place baby in a safety seat.

- Place the baby in a wind-up swing; be sure that his neck is supported.

Seeking Medical Help

If you find that your newborn cries a great deal, see a doctor to be sure there isn't a medical problem. Parents of colicky babies shouldn't be afraid to talk openly with their doctors. It's important to mention any concerns you have so you can put them at rest. In some situations



a doctor may prescribe medicine, but there is not any medicine yet that completely cures colic in all infants. If medication is prescribed, ask your doctor to talk about the possible side effects.

Coping Techniques for Parents

Caring for a colicky infant can be very difficult. The frustration may become overwhelming. Parents of a colicky baby need to have a plan to help them get through the stress of colic. Keep these ideas and tips in mind:

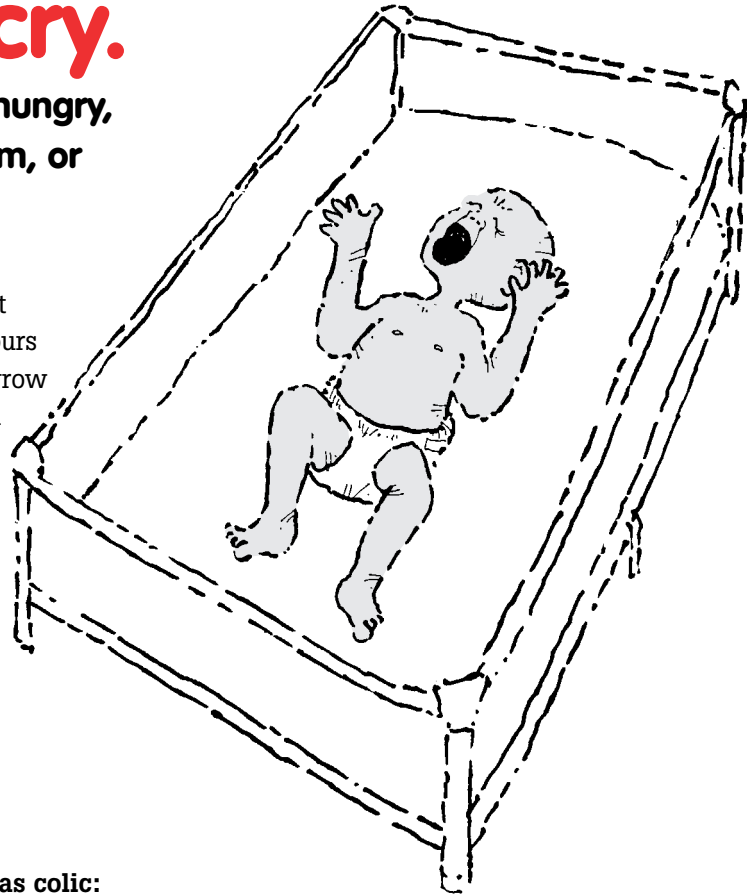
- Remember not to take the crying personally. Your baby's crying is not a comment on you as a parent.
- Take deep breaths. Try to relax as much as possible. A crying baby can be very frustrating, so try not to "lose your head."
- Take turns with the baby (with your spouse or someone else).
- Try taking 15 minutes to calm your baby. If she is still crying, put her down and let her cry. After 15 minutes, try to calm her again.
- Your first concern should be to make sure baby is safe and secure. It is normal for babies to sometimes cry.
- Take a break from your baby. Ask a trusted friend or relative to babysit so you can spend some time away from your infant.
- Talk to other parents, especially people who have had colicky babies themselves. These may be friends, relatives, or people in a parent support group.
- Don't be afraid to accept or ask for help from friends or relatives who offer. If you can, hire someone to help you around the home.

All babies cry.

They cry because they are hungry, cold, wet, tired, bored, warm, or just uncomfortable.

Doctors have found that during the first 7 weeks of life, a baby may cry 2½ hours a day. Babies usually cry less as they grow older and they find other ways to calm themselves, like sucking on pacifiers or fingers or playing with their hands.

While crying is normal, some babies seem to cry for no reason. They are not easily calmed, and they cry for long periods of time. These babies are often referred to as having colic.



What Is Colic?

These signs may mean that a baby has colic:

- Unexplained crying and fussiness (not due to hunger or pain)
- Crying that begins in baby's first month (usually in the first weeks)
- Irregular crying, one or more times a day
- Excessive crying (from 20 minutes to 2 hours each time, or more than 4 hours total each day)
- Nothing seeming to calm baby

A colicky baby may also do one or more of these things:

- Cry a loud, piercing cry
- Swing her arms and legs while crying
- Arch his back while crying
- Pull her knees up to her stomach while crying

It can really try your patience to have a baby with colic.

Just remember that the crying should happen less often as baby grows older, and be sure to ask others for the help you need during these difficult months.

What to Do When Baby Cries

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