

Is my baby crying because she has colic?

Listening to a baby cry for long periods of time can cause you stress and even anger. Babies cry for many reasons, but some cry because they have colic.

* What exactly is colic?

The cause of colic is not known, even though it is a common problem. Babies can be fussy, but babies with colic have long periods of sudden, unexplained crying that will not stop. The crying may be due to stomach pain.

Doctors often say a healthy baby is colicky if the baby:

- Cries for more than three hours per day, more than three days a week, for more than three weeks.
- Begins this process during the first 2 to 6 weeks of life.
- Stops by 3 to 4 months of age.

Other signs of a colicky infant may include:

- Hard to calm down
- Stiffening of legs, pulling legs up in pain, clenching of fists
- Passing a lot of gas
- Spitting up and crying during and after a feeding
- Not sleeping for very long at a time

Breastmilk oversupply (too much breastmilk) can cause colic in the breastfed baby. Moms with breastmilk oversupply often have constant breast fullness, leaking during and between feedings, and strong milk let-down.



* What can I do?

Although there's no cure for colic, try the following to calm a fussy, crying infant:

- Play calming music or talk quietly to your baby.
- Give your baby a gentle massage.
- Place your baby on your chest, skin to skin.
- Wrap your baby snugly in a blanket (swaddle).
- Hold your baby on his side/stomach.
- Gently swing or rock your baby in your arms.

(continued on other side)



What can I do?

(continued from other side)

- Make a loud “shushing” sound in your baby’s ear.
- Take your baby for a car ride or a brisk walk outside in a stroller.
- Do not give juice, especially apple, white grape, or pear juice – they may cause gas.
- If your breastfed baby has signs of colic and you have signs of breastmilk oversupply, talk to your WIC breastfeeding counselor or visit www.breastmilkcounts.com to learn what you can do about breastmilk oversupply.



* What if nothing seems to work?

1. Take your baby to the doctor or clinic to see if she has a medical problem. Colic may have nothing to do with your breastmilk or the infant formula you feed your baby. Still, it’s important to let your doctor make sure.
2. Ask your doctor before using any medications.
3. No matter how upset or angry you feel, do not shake your baby. Shaking can cause serious problems, including brain damage or even death. Let someone calmer help with the baby. If you or your partner needs help with your baby’s constant crying, call the Shaken Baby Alliance at 1 (877) 636-3727 (1-877-6-END-SBS).
4. Remember: be patient — and get someone to help you. Colic usually goes away within three to four months.

For more information on colic, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics www.aap.org/topics.html or the Mayo Clinic www.mayoclinic.com/health-information.