

Normal Crying verses Colic

Colic appears in some babies at about three weeks of life and disappears by four months old. Infants without colic will cry as little as one to two hours per day. Infants with colic often cry 3 hours or more at a time. Normally, the amount of crying peaks at six weeks of age and decreases after that. Crying is more frequent late in the day around dinner time.

Colicky cries are high-pitched and sounds urgent. It is often very grating and frustrating to the parent or caregiver. The crying period may be accompanied by tensing the abdominal muscles and flexing the legs while he/she attempts to lift their head. The infant appears to be in pain. Colic is seen equally in males and females and affects both breast and bottle fed infants. Colic is not the result of bad parenting.

Diet changes help a small number of babies, usually in just a day or two. If no effect is seen in a week, then the diet is not the problem. In bottle-fed infants, studies have demonstrated that the use of special formula like Nutramigen® may help. In breast-fed infants, eliminating cow's milk protein (milk, cheese, yogurt) from the mother's diet may help. Some breastfeeding mother also try eliminating nuts, eggs and wheat, though this does not commonly help.

Comforting Techniques

Each of these activities should be used for no less than 5 minutes to allow the infant time to react and settle.

- ✓ Skin to skin contact between parent and infant by placing the infant in a vertical position chest to chest.
- ✓ Walking with the infant over the shoulder. The baby's abdomen should be near to resting on the adult's shoulder. While holding the infant, walk very slowly about one step per second.
- ✓ Stand in one place and rock from one foot to the other at the some slow rate providing a soothing rhythmic activity. Don't jiggle or bob the baby up and down.
- ✓ An infant carrier strapped to the caregiver may be particularly helpful.
- ✓ The "colic walk" involves placing the baby face-down on your forearm with their chin cradled in your hand and their legs straddling your arm then walking in a slow, steady fashion.
- ✓ Offer a warm bath.
- ✓ Swaddle the infant with arms folded toward the chest.
- ✓ A wind-up swing, vibrating chair, or stroller rides outside.
- ✓ The use of "white noise" may help. It should never be so loud that conversation is difficult. In the past, parents used vacuum cleaners or running water. Parents now more often use apps or recorded noise to be played when needed. Placing the infant in his/her pumpkin seat next to a running dishwasher, dryer, or in the bathroom with the exhaust fan running may help.
- ✓ Use a pacifier as much as the baby likes.
- ✓ A bottle with a collapsible bag or a vented nipple may help prevent the swallowing of air.
- ✓ Avoid bright lights and loud noises, which can be disruptive to the sensitive infant.

Lastly, Care for Yourself:

Parents need time alone away from their babies, with or without colic. By spending one or two nights a week away from a colicky baby, parents can "recharge their batteries." You cannot be an effective parent if you are short on both sleep and energy. Try to seek assistance from friends or family members and make sure those caretakers are comfortable with caring for a fretful infant.

A Book That Helps:

Some parents have found Harvey Karp's book [The Happiest Baby on the Block](#) very helpful. It contains several comforting techniques that have proven to be the best known.