

Infant Colic

Colic gets better on its own after a few months. These tips might be helpful in the meantime.

Comforting your Baby

There is no "best" way to comfort your baby. Different babies respond to different methods, so you will need to see what works best for you.

The following suggestions may help:

- **Holding your baby during a crying episode** can sometimes help, as can wrapping them snugly in a blanket or baby sling.
- **Hold your baby in different positions** – such as on your shoulder, cradled in your arms, or lying with their tummy faced down along your forearm.
- **Sit or hold your baby upright during feeding** to prevent them swallowing air.
- **Don't drink too much tea, coffee and other caffeinated drinks if you're breastfeeding** – some women also find spicy food and alcohol can aggravate colic.
- **Use a fast-flow teat if you're bottle feeding** – holes in bottle teats that are too small may cause your baby to swallow air as they feed.
- **Burp your baby after feeds** – to do this, sit your baby upright or hold them against your shoulder and gently rub their back and tummy until they burp. They may vomit a small amount of milk when you do this.
- **Avoid overstimulating your baby by continually picking them up and putting them down** – gently comforting your baby in a quiet, darkened room may be better. If you're satisfied your baby isn't hungry, tired, too hot or cold, or in need of a nappy change, it may help to leave them in their cot for a short while.
- **Babies like movement** – pushing them around in their pram or pushchair or going for a drive can be comforting. Rocking them gently over your shoulder or carrying them around the house may also be helpful: but never shake your baby.
- **Some babies find white noise soothing** – this is the background sound of a washing machine, vacuum cleaner or radio static.
- **Gentle stomach or back rubs or a warm bath** may help.

Your wellbeing

If your baby has colic, it's important not to forget about your own wellbeing. Looking after a baby with colic can be exhausting and distressing, and it's common for parents to sometimes feel depressed, angry or helpless.

You may find the following tips useful:

- If you feel you cannot cope with your baby's crying, it's best to put them down somewhere safe and take a few minutes as a time out.
- Ask your friends and family for support – all parents need a break, and even an hour of rest on your own can help you cope better with the situation.
- Try to rest when your baby is asleep.
- Aim to see and talk to other adults every day, rather than spending all your time alone with your baby – you may find it useful to meet other parents with babies of a similar age to yours.

A support group called Cry-sis can also provide help and advice to parents with babies that cry excessively. You can contact the Cry-sis helpline on 0845 122 8669 (9am-10pm, seven days a week).

How do I treat?

As colic eventually improves on its own, medical treatment is not usually recommended. But if you're finding it hard to cope, speak to your health visitor or pharmacist for advice about possible treatments.

There isn't much good evidence for the effectiveness of these treatments, although some parents find them helpful. It may be worthwhile trying them one at a time for about a week or so each to see if they help.

Treatments include:

- **Simeticone drops** - Such as Infacol, are a supplement that can be added to your baby's bottle or breast milk before a feed. The drops are designed to help release bubbles of trapped air in your baby's digestive system.
A one-week trial of simeticone drops is sometimes recommended. If your baby's symptoms do not improve within this time, it's usually felt there's little point carrying on with the treatment. Simeticone drops are safe for babies to have and there have been no reports of side effects from the treatment.
- **Lactase drops** - Lactase is an enzyme that helps break down a sugar called lactose, which is found in breast and formula milk. Your baby may have a temporary problem digesting lactose, which could contribute to their colicky symptoms. Lactase drops, such as Colief, can be added to your baby's feed to make digesting the lactose easier. As with simeticone, using lactase drops for more than a week if symptoms don't improve isn't usually recommended.
- **Removing cows' milk** - It's possible your baby may have developed a short-term intolerance to proteins found in cows' milk and other dairy products. If you're breastfeeding, you can try removing dairy products from your diet for a week or two to see if your baby's symptoms improve.
Speak to your GP for advice if you decide to continue with a dairy-free diet after this point, as they may recommend taking additional calcium supplements to ensure you maintain good bone health. If you're bottle feeding, ask your health visitor for advice about switching to a hypoallergenic milk formula. This type of milk has low levels of the protein that may be causing the intolerance. Again, you can try using it for a week or two to see if your baby's symptoms improve.

Your GP can advise you about the most suitable hypoallergenic milk formula for your baby. Soya milk formula is not recommended for babies less than six months old, as it contains hormones that may interfere with your baby's physical and sexual development.

If your baby's symptoms don't improve after using hypoallergenic milk formula for a week or two, it's usually felt there's little point carrying on with it.

Speak to your pharmacist - for advice if you're not sure what's best for you and your baby.

Treatments to Avoid

The following treatments could be dangerous for your baby and shouldn't be tried:

- **Dicycloverine (also known as dicyclomine)** – a medication used to control stomach cramps that has been used to treat colic in the past, but is now known to cause serious side effects in babies
- **Star anise tea** – a herbal tea that has traditionally been used to treat colic, but is no longer recommended because it sometimes contains toxins that could poison your baby

When should I seek advice?

If you are concerned about your baby's symptoms or feel unable to cope, please speak with your GP or health visitor.

More information is available at the following websites

- NHS website - www.nhs.uk
- Cry-sis – help for crying & sleepless babies - www.cry-sis.org.uk
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice

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