

Colic is an acute abdominal pain probably caused by abnormal bowel functions and wind.

What to look for

Colic is thought to occur when the bowel in a baby contracts more regularly than an adult's slower peristaltic movements. It is characterised by:

- loud screaming lasting for hours, three or more days a week and the baby is usually difficult to comfort.
- Crying for long periods after a baby has been fed.
- while crying, the baby draws his knees up over his stomach as if he has a stomach ache.
- bowel movement or wind at the beginning or end of crying episodes

It is very common for children to experience colic and although uncomfortable for the child and exhausting for the parents it is a relatively harmless condition that ends after the child is 4 months old.

Causes

The cause of colic is not known. Experts attribute it to any number of things, including an infant's immature digestive system, weaning the child too early, allergies, hormones in breast milk, and overfeeding. It is worsened when the baby cries as he or she takes in extra air which can exacerbate the problem.

Traditional Treatment

There is no actual cure for colic, although you can often find relief from many at-home remedies have proved helpful in soothing colicky babies. Always try to be calm and curb your anxiousness as this can inadvertently be communicated to your child and it will make the condition worse.

Do not ever punish a child with colic. If you feel you cannot cope, leave someone else with the child for a few moments while you relax calm yourself.

If you suspect your child has colic, call your paediatrician. After ruling out possible medical causes of prolonged crying, most doctors recommend simple remedies you can perform at home.

Some encourage parents to talk with other parents for support. Give the baby something safe to suck, this will distract them from the pain. Also rhythmic rocking or walking with the baby is soothing.

At-Home Remedies -

- Be consistent with the ways in which you pacify the child
- Give your baby things to distract him or her.
- Motion can relieve colic. So take them for a walk, or drive or gently rock them.
- White noise may soothe your child.
- Wrap the child snugly in a blanket to provide a sense of security and comfort.
- Use a warm water bottle to sooth the pain
- Ask a relative or friend to take over when you feel yourself getting frustrated or exhausted.

When to seek further professional advice

- your baby has never had colic before
- bouts of colic are accompanied by fever, diarrhoea, vomiting, or constipation.
- your baby's crying sounds painful, not fussy - indicating injury or illness is causing the distress.
- your baby is older than three months and still acting colicky; behavioural problems or illness may be the cause.
- your colicky child fails to gain weight and is not hungry, which suggests illness.
- you're exhausted or fear stress might lead you to hurt your baby.