

## Common Infant Problems (birth through 1 year)

### What About Colic?

#### Is my baby crying because she has colic?

Listening to a baby cry for long periods of time can cause 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.

Colic causes the babies who have it — and their families — a lot of pain. While most babies have some fussy periods during their first few weeks of life, babies with colic tend to have long periods of sudden, unexplained crying that won't stop.

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

- cries for at least three hours per day, three days in a row for at least three weeks.
- begins this process during the first three weeks of life.

- continues for up to 3 or 4 months of age.

#### Other signs of a colicky infant may include:

- hard to calm down
- stiffening of legs, clenching of fists
- passing a lot of gas
- spitting up, vomiting, and crying during and after a feeding
- not sleeping for very long at a time

#### What can I do?

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

- If you're breastfeeding, talk to a breastfeeding counselor. The problem may be as simple as an oversupply of breastmilk or an overactive let-down reflex — both of which are easily helped.
- Make home life as calm as possible by playing soothing music or talking quietly to your baby.

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- Burp your baby at pauses during and after a feeding.
- Wrap your baby snugly in a blanket.
- Place your baby on your chest, skin to skin, to calm her.
- Take your baby for a car ride or a brisk walk outside in a stroller.

### What if nothing seems to work?

1. Take your baby to the doctor or clinic to see if he has an ear infection or another 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 need help with your baby's constant crying, call the Shaken Baby Alliance at 1 (877) 636-3727.
4. Remember: be patient — and get someone to help you. Colic usually goes away within three to four months.



This is one in a series of handouts to help parents and caretakers handle common infant problems.

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