



Colic in Babies

Patient information leaflet



Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your baby's condition.

Colic is the name for intense, frequent crying by a baby for no obvious reason. It is a common problem that usually gets better by the time the baby is 4 months old, and usually stops by the time they are 5 months old.

Babies with colic often cry for several hours in the late afternoon or evening. They may clench their fists, go red in the face and be very windy. Sometimes they pull their knees up to their chest or arch their back when they are crying. It is often hard to soothe a baby with colic.

Between crying episodes, babies with colic are usually settled. They feed and gain weight as you would expect them to.

Nobody knows exactly why babies get colic but it may be caused by problems with digesting food.



Treatment and Prevention

Colic will get better on its own within a few months. Medicines and herbal remedies are not recommended.

To soothe your baby, you could try:

- holding or cuddling them when they cry a lot
- gentle movement – rocking your baby over your shoulder or pushing them in their pram
- gentle background (white) noise – the sound of music or a hairdryer or vacuum cleaner
- giving your baby a warm bath
- feeding your baby upright to stop them swallowing air

Keep feeding your baby as usual, winding them gently during the feed and afterwards.

If holding your baby when they cry becomes too much for you, put your baby somewhere safe such as their cot and take a break for a few minutes.

Looking after a baby with colic can be stressful for parents. Try to rest when your baby is sleeping. Remember that colic does go away, and seek help from family and friends if you need to, so that you can rest and have time for yourself. Some people find it helps to meet other parents with babies of the same age to share experiences.

Discuss your concerns about your baby with your health visitor.

The charity Cry-sis provides support for parents of crying or sleepless babies. The Cry-sis helpline 0800 448 0737 is available 9am to 10pm, 7 days a week.



When to Get Help

Contact your GP or call 111 if:

- you are finding it hard to cope or feel very down after having your baby
- your baby is not growing or putting on weight as expected
- your baby cannot feed well
- none of the ways of soothing your baby are working
- your baby is over 4 months old and their colic is not improving or is getting worse
- your baby is less than 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or higher or a temperature of 39°C or higher if they are 3 to 6 months old
- you are worried about your baby

Go to A&E or call 999 if your baby:

- has a weak or high-pitched cry, different from their normal cry
- seems floppy when you pick them up
- turns blue, blotchy or very pale
- vomits green liquid
- has blood in their poo
- has a fit (seizure)
- has breathing problems such as breathing quickly or grunting when they breathe
- has a swelling in the soft spot at the top of their head
- is being violently sick a lot (projectile vomiting with vomit shooting out of their mouth)
- has a high temperature but their hands and feet feel cold
- has a spotty, purple-red rash anywhere on their body
- is under 8 weeks old and does not want to feed

If you are worried that your baby's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



More information

For more information on colic in babies, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/Colic/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/childrens-health/colic-in-babies-and-infants>

Cry-sis: <https://www.cry-sis.org.uk/>

Healthier Together: "Crying and Colic" <https://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/worried-your-baby-unwell-under-3-months-2/worried-about-your-baby/colic-in-infants>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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