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 when a baby cries a lot, is difficult to settle, or seems upset for no clear reason. Colic is a common problem. The symptoms usually get better by the time a baby is 4 months old and stop by the time they are 5 months.

Babies with colic often cry for several hours, especially in the late afternoon or evening. They may clench their fists, go red in the face and pass a lot of wind. Sometimes they pull their knees up to their chest or arch their back when they are crying. It can be difficult to soothe a baby during these times.

Between periods of crying, babies with colic are usually settled. They feed and gain weight as expected.

Nobody knows exactly why babies get colic. There may not be enough different types of bacteria in their gut or their gut may be too active.

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 your baby when they are upset
- gently rocking your baby over your shoulder, in their Moses basket or cot, or taking them for a walk in their pram
- playing soft background noise (sometimes called white noise), such as music, a hairdryer or a vacuum cleaner (you can download white-noise apps)
- giving your baby a warm bath
- feeding your baby in an upright position to stop them swallowing so much air
- keeping your baby's surroundings as calm as possible

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 and carers. Try to rest when your baby is sleeping. Remember that colic does go away. Ask for 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 talk to other parents or carers with babies of the same age to share experiences.

Talk to your health visitor if you have any concerns about your baby.

The ICON campaign provides support and advice to help people cope with crying babies.
ICON stands for:

I – Infant crying is normal
C – Comforting methods can help
O – It's okay to walk away
N – Never, ever shake a baby

BABIES CRY, YOU CAN COPE
www.iconcope.org

The charity Cry-sis provides support for families with babies who cry excessively or have sleeping problems. The Cry-sis helpline 0800 448 0737 is available from 9am to 10pm, 7 days a week.

When to Get Help

Ask for a GP or health visitor appointment if:

- your baby is over 4 months old and the colic does not seem to be going away

Ask for an urgent GP or health visitor appointment if:

- your baby starts to lose weight
- your baby stops putting on weight or growing as expected
- your baby develops severe colic that is not improving
- you start to find it hard to cope or feel very down after having your baby

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

- develops a weak high-pitched or continuous cry that is different from their normal cry

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: 111.wales.nhs.uk/Colic/
Patient UK: patient.info/childrens-health/colic-in-babies-and-infants
ICON: iconcope.org
Cry-sis: www.cry-sis.org.uk
Healthier Together: www.hwehealthiertogether.nhs.uk/parentscarers/worried-your-baby-unwell-under-3-months/my-baby-crying-excessively

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.

Version: 2 Published: November 2026
All images taken from Getty Images & Canva Pro

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Welsh Medicines Advice Service