



Coping with Colic

Although all babies cry, some babies cry much more than others. Excessive crying is oftentimes a symptom of a condition known as “colic.” Colic is defined as crying that

- begins and ends for no obvious reason
- lasts at least 3 hours a day
- happens at least 3 days a week
- continues for 3 weeks to 3 months

If you are concerned about your baby’s crying, talk with his health care provider for ideas about what you can do.

To Think About

No two children or families are alike. Thinking about the following questions can help you apply the information below to your own child and family.

- When you think about your baby’s crying, are there particular experiences or situations that you find upset her more than others? Why do you think that is? How does this help you understand your baby better?
- What calms your baby? What have you tried that has worked? What does this tell you about your child?
- It is important to tune in to your own reaction to your baby’s crying. Some parents are more distressed by their baby’s crying than others. What is it like for you? Do you find yourself getting very upset yourself when your baby cries? If so, how do or can you calm yourself?

What You Can Do

Figuring out the best way to soothe your baby is a process of trial and error. Often parents have to try several strategies to discover what works. The fact is, though, that sometimes nothing works. Remember, just by *being there* you are letting your baby know he can trust you to always be there for him. To soothe and comfort a fussy baby (as well as yourself), try some of the ideas on the following page.

(continued on next page)



Coping with Colic

Use soothing sounds. Talk or sing softly to your baby. Background noise can also be comforting. Try running a fan or humidifier in your baby's room.

Try different kinds of movement. Some babies find gentle, slow movements like swaying soothing. Others are calmed by more vigorous movements such as swinging or faster rocking.

Offer a pacifier. Sucking is often very comforting to babies. If acceptable to you, see if your baby is soothed by sucking a "paci."

Reduce stimulation such as lights, sights, sounds, and textures. Sometimes less stimulation leads to less crying.

Give your baby a break. Give your baby some time to try to soothe herself. Put her down in her crib or other safe place for 5–10 minutes. Some babies need this time alone to "reorganize" themselves.

Beware the quick fix. Cereal in the bottle? Colic drops? Rubbing something on baby's gums? There is no evidence to show that these strategies work. If you do try a quick-fix remedy, check with your child's health care provider first to be sure it is safe.

Remember the crying will end. Usually the worst of crying and colic is over by the time your baby is four months old. If your baby does have colic, it does *not* mean that he will be a difficult toddler. Don't forget, colic will end.

Soothe yourself. Caring for a crying baby can be very stressful. Ask for help from trusted friends and families so you can get a break yourself. When you feel calm, it helps your baby feel calm as well.

Share your feelings. Talk to your partner, friends, and family. Look for parent or parent-child groups. Your city may have a child development center that provides support and guidance to parents coping with their infants' excessive crying. Ask your health care provider about these resources.

For more information on colic and crying from birth to three, visit:

www.zerotothree.org/challenges

This resource was made possible by generous funding from the Carl and Roberta Deutsch Foundation.