



Colic

All babies cry, but some cry more than others. Healthy newborns start to cry more around 2 weeks of age. The crying should increase until about 6 weeks of age. After that, the crying should improve. Colic is when a healthy baby cries more than 3 hours a day for 3 or more days in a week. If this happens 3 weeks in a row, your baby may have colic. The cause of colic is unknown. Although healthy babies can have colic, crying can also be caused by physical problems. Your child should be seen by a doctor.

Symptoms

Colic usually begins by 2 to 3 weeks of age and lasts up to 3 or 4 months of age. The crying may or may not occur at the same time each day, but usually happens more often in the evening. The baby does not stop crying when usual ways of comforting, such as holding and feeding, are tried. The colicky infant usually shows these signs:

- Flailing arms and legs
- Clenched fists
- Arched back
- Legs drawn up toward abdomen
- Struggling and angry when held



Picture 1 Cuddle your baby.

Possible causes

No one knows the real cause of colic, but some things that *may* be related include:

- Exposure to smoke
- Immature nervous or digestive system
- Gas pain
- Stomach spasms

Ways to help

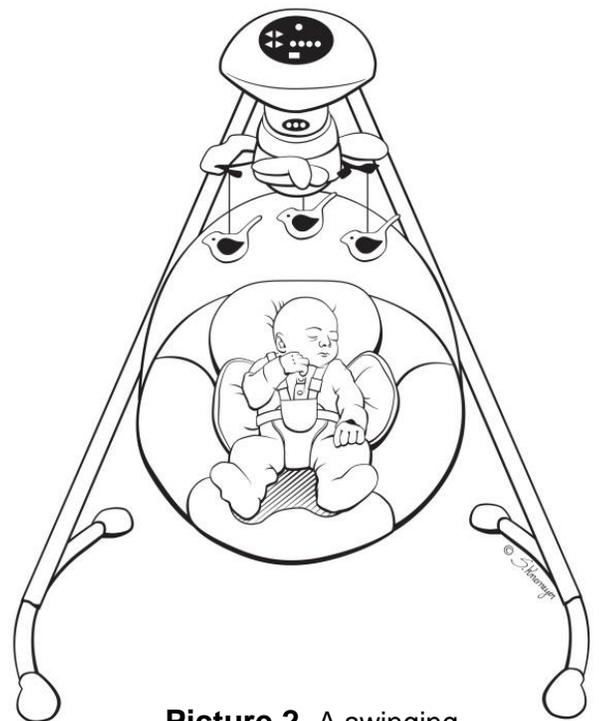
There is no sure treatment for colic, so it may be difficult to comfort your crying baby. The following suggestions have been tried by other parents who have had colicky infants:

- Cuddle your baby (Picture 1, page 1).
- Take your baby for a ride in a stroller or car.
- Place your baby in a wind-up swing. Prop a young infant with blankets (Picture 2).
- Rock your baby in a rocking chair.
- Give your baby a pacifier. Many infants are soothed by extra sucking.
- Burp the baby often while feeding. This removes air from the baby's stomach and reduces gas. Also try massaging the baby's stomach.
- Play soothing music or tapes of a heartbeat. This will soothe you and your baby.
- Carry your baby in a front pack. Walk while holding your baby.
- Run the vacuum cleaner or washer. The constant sound can be a comfort.
- Do not feed your baby every time he cries.
- Keep a list of the things that help your baby stop crying.

When to call the doctor

Call your child's doctor if your baby has any of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Hard stools
- Poor weight gain
- Excessive spitting up of formula
- Vomiting
- Blood in stools (bowel movements)
- Poor feeding



Picture 2 A swinging movement sometimes helps to soothe the baby.

Important to remember

Colic is a common concern. It affects 1 in 4 infants and can cause the entire family a great deal of distress. Usually colic will end between the infant's third and sixth months of life.

A baby who cries too much despite everything you do to comfort him can make the parents nervous and angry. It is important for you to remember the following things:

- Colic is not your fault.
- Your anger and frustration are normal.
- Your baby is not angry with you.
- Your baby is healthy in spite of all the crying.

Preventing shaken baby syndrome

Remember, it is okay to walk away if you find yourself getting frustrated or angry with your baby or child. Your baby will not be hurt if he or she continues to cry.

Gently and safely place your baby in the crib or swing. Make sure you secure any railings or safety belts before walking away. Check on your baby every 5 to 10 minutes.

- **Caution: Never shake your baby.** Shaking will not stop the crying and could cause serious brain damage. It is important that all caregivers have this information. For more information on this, see HH-I-366, *Shaken Baby Syndrome*.
- Arrange for a relative, friend, or baby-sitter to stay with the baby while you get out of the house one evening a week. Go see a movie, shop, go out to dinner, or just take a walk.
- Try to rest when your baby naps. Getting enough rest will help relieve your tension.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse or call _____.