



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Colic

All babies cry, but some cry more than others. Healthy newborns start to cry more around 2 weeks of age. They will cry even more until they're about 6 weeks old. After that, the crying usually gets better.

Colic is when a healthy baby cries for more than 3 hours each day for 3 or more days in one week. If this happens 3 weeks in a row, your baby may have colic.

- Colic can start at 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 it usually happens more often in the evening.
- With colic, your baby will not stop crying when you try usual ways of comforting, such as holding and feeding.
- Colic is a common. It affects 1 in 4 babies and can cause stress on a whole family. It's important to remember:
 - Colic is not your fault.
 - Your baby is not angry with you.
 - Your anger is normal.
 - Colic is not making your baby sick.

Possible Causes

The cause of colic is not known. Although healthy babies can have colic, crying can also be caused by physical problems or their environment. Some things that may be related are:

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

Signs and Symptoms

Crying is the main sign of colic. While crying, your baby may:

- Flail their arms and legs
- Clench their fists
- Arch their back
- Struggle and seem angry when held
- Draw their legs up toward their belly

Ways to Help

There is no treatment for colic. This makes it hard to comfort your crying baby. You can:

- Avoid smoking around them. Do not let others smoke around them.
- Avoid feeding them every time they cry. This can lead to overfeeding, which can make them more uncomfortable.
- Burp them often while feeding. This removes air from their stomach and reduces gas. You can also try massaging their stomach.
- Hold them in your arms. Place them on their left side to help with digestion or on their stomach for support. Gently rub their back. If they fall asleep, put them in their crib on their back.
- Play constant, calming sounds. Use a: white noise machine, humming fan, soothing sound playlist, or recording of a heart beating.
- Take them for a ride in a stroller or car.
- Rock them in a rocking chair.
- Give them a pacifier. Many babies are soothed by extra sucking.
- Walk while holding them. Carry them in a front pack (Picture 1).



Image source: National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Picture 1 A front pack holds your baby so they're facing you.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your baby's doctor or health care provider if they have any of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Poor weight gain
- Throwing up (vomiting)
- Hard poop
- Poor feeding
- Spitting up a lot of formula
- Diarrhea
- Blood in poop

Preventing Abusive Head Trauma

Remember to place your baby in a safe place and **walk away** if you start feeling angry or frustrated. It will not hurt them if they keep crying.

Never shake your baby. Shaking will not stop the crying and can cause abusive head trauma (AHT). AHT, formerly called Shaken Baby Syndrome, is caused by serious brain damage. It happens when a baby's head is moved rapidly, then suddenly stops.

Everyone around your baby needs to know that they may cry a lot. This includes family members, friends, or babysitters. They must know how to comfort them to prevent AHT.

To avoid AHT:

1. Gently and safely place your baby **on their back** in a crib or swing. Secure all railings or safety belts before you walk away.
2. Check on your baby every 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Ask someone you trust, like a relative or friend, to stay with your baby while you get out of the house. Go see a movie, shop, go out to dinner, or take a walk.
4. Try to rest when your baby naps. Getting enough rest will help with stress.

If you have any questions, ask your doctor or health care provider.