



Colic: what it is & how to deal with it

A diagnosis of colic comes when a baby cries for more than 3 hours a day with no obvious cause for the crying. Some medical professionals believe it to be the result of digestive discomfort.

Dr Harvey Karp, a paediatrician in the US believes that babies with colic were simply born too early, and could have done with another 3 months in-utero.

Colic tends to start around the 3 week mark, once maternal melatonin has worn off, and for most, stops like a switch has been flicked at around 12 weeks.

Babies with colic often want to feed frequently, as sucking can be very comforting. They can easily become overfed, so consider introducing a dummy/pacifier to help with non-nutritive sucking.

Overtired babies often display similar symptoms to colic like

- persistent crying
- difficulty settling/calming
- waking up hysterical after just a short period of sleep

Ensuring your baby is following age appropriate wake windows and isn't exposed to too much stimulation (think 'pass the baby') will aid in limiting the crying. Overtired babies have a very low tolerance threshold and become quickly irritated & upset, which can lead to lots of tears.

If you have had reflux ruled out by your GP or paediatrician as a reason for persistent crying, we need to work on managing the symptoms of colic until it subsides.

Ways to help manage colic symptoms

- A firm, arms down swaddle to help calm your baby's sympathetic nervous system and ensure they aren't going to wake shortly after being put down from startling
- Upright settling in arms (patting/rocking/jiggling) rather than picking up and putting down repeatedly
- Loud white noise as loud as running shower, about 2 metres away from baby's head
- Low stimulus environment - TV off, lights low/off, one person settling
- Use a Dummy/pacifier for some non-nutritional sucking

Caring for a baby with colic can be an exhausting task and while in the thick of it, it might feel like it's going on forever! I hear you, my firstborn had severe colic and the first 3 months of his life nearly pushed me to breaking point.

My top 3 pieces of advice

1. Time will be on your & on your baby's side!
2. Try to prioritise enough rest & sleep for yourself and ask for support from friends, family and maybe consider outsourcing chores, if you can (cleaners, food deliveries, dry cleaners etc.). Someone wants to visit the baby? Sure, come over + bring some food or pick something up from the supermarket on your way, thanks very much!
3. Are you a perfectionist? I know it's easier said than done (I tend to be one myself) but: Try to let go & prioritise what's important-chaos & dirt are patient

Listening to your colicky baby cry for hours at the time can be mentally very draining and it will be important for you to feel emotionally strong enough to support your baby through these uncomfortable times.

So reach out to that village out there, don't expect yourself to become super woman. You are already one, even if you don't feel like it!

Your Village

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