

---

## What is Colic?

Colic is very common in newborn babies and may continue for the first three to four months after birth. Although it is often distressing for parents, colic does not harm the baby and there are no long-term problems. Babies with colic will continue to feed and gain weight normally.

All babies cry, and this can be very draining for parents. It is often difficult to work out whether your baby is hungry, cold, tired or in need of a nappy change. Sometimes there is nothing you can do to soothe them, and your baby may continue to cry and scream for a long period of time.

The intensity and regularity of the crying varies between babies, but with colic it usually continues for three hours or more every day, on most days of the week. If you and your doctor are sure that there is no other medical reason for the baby's distress, then colic may be diagnosed.

## Symptoms

It is perfectly normal for a newborn to cry a lot. During their first three months of life, babies can cry up to two hours a day, but babies with colic have different habits. They usually:

- Cry for an unknown reason
- Start to cry in the evening, or at the same time every day
- Cry for three or more hours each day, more than three days a week, for at least three weeks
- Make sounds that are more intense than normal – more like a high-pitched scream than a cry
- Clench their fists
- Bend their arms and legs into their belly
- Have a bloated tummy
- Have a red flushed face when crying
- Pass wind during the crying, often because they have swallowed air.

## Causes

Colic is extremely common in babies, but the exact cause is unknown. Many parents learn by trial and error how to soothe their baby's crying, and how to recognise what it is the baby wants.

Possible causes of colic include:

- Poor digestion – some research suggests that babies get cramps as milk is passed through their immature digestive system. Colic usually disappears before weaning onto solid food begins
- Wind – babies may swallow tiny air bubbles as they feed or cry, which can cause pain in the intestines
- If your baby also has eczema, then you should ask your GP to consider referral to an allergy clinic.

## Diagnosis

An otherwise healthy baby who cries excessively in the first four months of life is generally thought to have colic. About 20% of babies get colic, and it affects boys and girls equally, both bottle and breast fed babies. For parents, it is important to try to remain calm and take regular breaks. If you are tired

and stressed, you may find it harder to cope with the situation. The following measures may help to soothe a crying baby:

- Holding your baby during a crying episode
- Preventing your baby from swallowing air by sitting them upright during feeding
- Bathing your baby in a warm bath
- Gently massaging your baby's tummy
- Don't drink too much tea, coffee and other caffeine-containing drinks if you are breastfeeding. Some women also find that spicy food and alcohol can aggravate colic
- Use a 'fast flow' teat if you are bottle feeding, as holes in bottle teats that are too small may cause your baby to swallow air as they feed
- Always burp your baby after a feed. They may vomit a small amount of milk when you do this
- Avoid overstimulating your baby by continually picking them up and putting them down, as some research suggests this may aggravate the crying.

## Contacts

If you are worried about your child please take them to your GP or call 111 for further advice or support.

## Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/ department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

### Trust Values

- Courtesy and respect
- A welcoming and positive attitude
- Polite, friendly and interested in people
- Value and respect people as individuals  
So people feel **welcome**
- Attentively kind and helpful
- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
- Attentive, responsive & take time to help
- Visible presence of staff to provide care  
So people feel **cared for**

- Responsive communication
- Listen to people & answer their questions
- Keep people clearly informed
- Involve people  
So people feel **in control**
- Effective and professional
- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
- Effective care / services from joined up teams
- Organised and timely, looking to improve  
So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

**For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240**