

Consult your doctor to ensure that this information is right for your child. Information below is for general information and does not constitute medical advice.

What is colic?

Colic is the extreme end of normal crying behavior in a baby between 3 weeks and 3 months of age.¹ The amount of crying defined as extreme or excessive often differs according to the personal standards of a particular caregiver. However, health professionals generally diagnose colic when a baby is otherwise healthy but for more than 3 weeks cries more than 3 hours a day, more than 3 days a week, and with greater intensity than is typical for the age. It is very difficult to console a baby once an episode of colic has started.

Colic, like normal crying behavior, usually peaks at about 6 to 8 weeks of age and then gradually goes away on its own between 8 and 14 weeks of age. Doctors sometimes call colic exaggerated infant crying behavior.

What causes it?

Evidence suggests that colic results from a combination of a baby's sensitive temperament, environment, and immature nervous system. These factors can make a baby cry easily and have difficulty stopping once he or she has begun. As babies grow and develop, they are better able to regulate crying behavior. The frequency and intensity of crying will gradually decrease after about 6 to 8 weeks of age.

Colic is not related to health conditions, such as digestion problems. Rarely, excessive crying in a baby first diagnosed with colic is later found to be related to cow's milk protein intolerance, fructose intolerance, transmission of medication by-products through breast milk, or other health problem.² Also, temporary symptoms, such as abdominal gas, can make crying episodes worse. Smoking while pregnant may increase the likelihood that your baby will have colic.³

Are any other symptoms related to colic?

Vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or blood or mucus in the stool are not symptoms of colic. If your baby has any of these symptoms, he or she needs to be checked by a health professional.

How is colic diagnosed?

If you are concerned about your baby's crying, schedule an appointment with your health professional, or plan to discuss the issue at your baby's next routine checkup. To make sure that crying is not related to another condition, your health professional may perform a physical examination and ask you about your baby's medical history, what comforting techniques you have tried, and whether you've noticed any other symptoms. You may also be asked about how the crying affects you and to demonstrate how you burp your baby. Your health professional

may recommend monitoring your baby's crying and other activities by keeping a diary.

If a baby with colic has other symptoms (such as vomiting, diarrhea, blood or mucus in the stool, or fever), the health professional will do laboratory tests or X-rays to determine their cause.

Is there any treatment?

Home treatment measures to comfort your baby usually are all that is needed for a baby with colic. These may include getting help from your spouse, family members, friends, or others to give you needed breaks or taking the baby outside for a walk in the stroller. These measures don't cure colic, but they can help decrease the frequency and intensity of crying episodes. Babies generally grow out of colic by about 3 months of age.