

Colic Symptoms

Brown Center for the Study of Children at Risk, Women and Infants' Hospital

1. Colic has been defined as being present when infants cry 3 or more hours/day, three or more days/week, for three weeks in a row. About 20% of normal children meet this criteria. Colic often peaks by 6 to 8 weeks of age and is said to resolve in most cases by 4 months of age. In our experience as well as in research studies, infants with colic develop problematic sleep habits and often go on to have sleep problems or to be described by their parents as "poor sleepers".
2. In a few infants, colic has been shown to be associated with allergy to cow's milk protein and soy protein. For bottle fed babies it is reasonable to try a week of a hypoallergenic formula such as Nutramigen or Alimentum to determine if your child will respond to this treatment. If symptoms are not appreciably better, return to your former formula of choice. Hypoallergenic formulas such as these are expensive and they smell and taste bad. Infants taking these formulas often have looser stools. For breast fed babies a week's trial of removing all dairy products from a nursing mom's diet may result in significant decrease in infant crying. Breast feeding mom's should also eliminate caffeine (coffee, chocolate, soda) and theophyllin (tea) from their diets since these increase wakefulness, irritability and reflux symptoms, are transmitted through breast milk, and have a longer duration of action in babies than in mothers.
3. If your baby is well (no fever, cough, vomiting, diarrhea or other symptoms) and has been crying and you've tried feeding, changing the diaper, burping, rocking, etc., it is okay to give both of you a break by putting him/her down in the crib or in an infant seat and allowing him/her to cry for 10 to 15 minutes. After this time, check on him/her and if he/she is still crying, pick him/her up and again try your comforting routines once more. If crying persists, it is reasonable to try another 10 to 15 minutes of allowing your baby to soothe him/herself, especially if you know he/she hasn't slept for several hours and is tired and possibly overstimulated.
4. For gassiness, try the gas relieving exercises which involve slow movement of your baby's bent legs toward his/her stomach and side to side, while your baby lies on his/her back. You may use this a few times per day in order to minimize gas build-up. Wait at least 30 minutes after a feeding to try this.
5. A probiotic (good bacteria) *Lactobacillus reuteri* has shown gradual but steady benefit in fussy babies of breast feeding mothers on dairy elimination diet in 2 Italian studies. This is marketed in the US as "BioGaia" and costs about \$35 per month.
6. Consider asking a trusted friend or family member to stay with your baby for brief periods so you can have a break.
7. Try to nap, meditate or otherwise relax when your baby does.
8. It is important to identify at least 30 minutes a day of "Mom Time" when you can read a book, watch a TV or go for a walk, as you please. Remember that you are the most important being in your child's life, so you must consider your own needs.
9. Try to go out as a couple at least once before your next visit.