

[Return to Web version](#)

## Colic

### How do I know if my baby has colic?

Babies who have colic cry a lot more than most babies. They may clench their fists when crying, curl up their legs or seem like they are in pain. They may even turn bright red from crying. When this crying lasts for more than 3 hours a day and happens at least 3 days per week for more than 3 weeks, it's called colic. Colicky babies usually get fussy toward the end of the day, but colic can happen at any time.

A baby who has colic may cry in bouts or may cry almost all of the time. When your baby cries, he or she may swallow air. This may give your baby gas and make your baby's tummy look swollen and feel tight, which may make him or her even more uncomfortable.

[Return to top](#)

### What causes colic?

No one is sure what causes colic. Babies who have colic are typically healthy, so it's not caused by a medical problem. Colic isn't caused by the way the baby is handled or treated, and it is not the parents' fault. It may be caused by stomach pain or the baby's temperament. Babies who have colic seem to need more attention and are more sensitive to their environment than other babies.

[Return to top](#)

### How long will the colic last?

Colic usually starts a few weeks after birth. It usually goes away by age 3 months, although it can last longer. If your baby is still colicky after 3 months of age, he or she may be experiencing a [reflux disorder](#).

[Return to top](#)

### Things to remember about colic

- You didn't cause the colic, so try not to feel guilty.
- Colic almost always goes away by 3 months of age. It should go away by the time your baby is 6 months old.
- You can try many things to soothe your baby.
- Giving your baby extra attention won't "spoil" him or her.
- Just because your baby has colic doesn't mean he or she is unhealthy.

[Return to top](#)

## What can I do to help my baby stop crying?

You can try a number of things to soothe your baby. These may include changing the way you feed or hold your baby. The tips listed in the box below may help.

[Return to top](#)

### Tips on soothing your baby

- Feed your baby in an upright position.
- Burp your baby often.
- If you are breastfeeding, try making small changes in your own diet. Try to limit spicy foods, citrus fruits or caffeine.
- Rock your baby in a rocking chair or cradle.
- Put your baby in a wind-up swing (make sure your baby can support his or her head).
- Give your baby a warm bath.
- Give your baby a pacifier.
- Gently rub your baby's stomach.
- Wrap or swaddle your baby in a soft blanket.
- Put your baby in a stroller and go for a walk.
- Go for a drive with your baby in the car seat.

[Return to top](#)

## What changes in feeding may help my baby stop crying?

Try feeding your baby if more than 2 hours have passed since the last feeding. Feed your baby more often and less at a time.

If you feed your baby formula, your family doctor might suggest trying a different brand. Warming the formula to body temperature before a feeding may also help.

Try using a nipple with a smaller hole on the bottle if a bottle feeding takes less than 20 minutes. Avoid feeding your baby too quickly.

[Return to top](#)

## Will holding my baby differently help?

Sometimes babies who have colic will respond to different ways of being held or rocked.

- Hold your baby across your lap and massage his or her back.
- Hold your baby on top of a running dishwasher, washing machine or dryer (don't leave your baby alone).
- Hold your baby upright. This will help if your baby has gas.
- Hold your baby while walking.

[Return to top](#)

## What can I do when I feel frustrated with my baby?

Colic can be very frustrating for parents. Babies who don't stop crying can be hard to care for. Any time you feel overwhelmed and frustrated, get someone else to watch your baby for a while.

If you can't find anyone to help you, try going into a nearby room and watching TV or listening to the radio. Make sure your baby will be safe without immediate supervision. Crying will not hurt your baby. Be sure you give yourself time away from your baby so you don't get too frustrated.

[Return to top](#)

### **Call your family doctor if:**

- Your baby's cry changes from a fussy one to a painful one.
- Your baby stops gaining weight.
- Your baby has a fever.
- You're afraid you might hurt your baby.

[Return to top](#)

### **Source**

[Written by familydoctor.org editorial staff.](#)

American Academy of Family Physicians

Reviewed/Updated: 03/10

Created: 01/95

[Copyright](#) © 1995-2011 [American Academy of Family Physicians](#)  
[Home](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)  
[About This Site](#) | [What's New](#) | [Advertising Policy](#)