



Colic Relief Tips for Parents

Does your infant have a regular fussy period each day when it seems you can do nothing to comfort them? This is common for babies. It tends to happen between 6:00 p.m. and midnight—just when you, too, are feeling tired from the day. These periods of crankiness may feel like torture, especially if you have other demanding children or work to do. Fortunately, though, they don't last long.



When are babies the most fussy?

The length of this regular fussing (</English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Responding-to-Your-Babys-Cries.aspx>) usually peaks at about three hours a day by six weeks, and then declines to one or two hours a day by three to four months. As long as your baby calms (</English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Calming-A-Fussy-Baby.aspx>) within a few hours and is relatively peaceful the rest of the day, there's no reason for alarm.

Symptoms of colic in babies

If the crying does not stop, but intensifies and lasts throughout the day or night, it may be caused by colic. About one-fifth of all babies develop colic, usually between the second and fourth weeks. Colicky babies cry inconsolably, often screaming, extending or pulling up their legs, and passing gas (</English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/Breaking-Up-Gas.aspx>). The crying spells can occur around the clock, although they often become worse in the early evening.

What causes a colic?

Unfortunately, there is no definite explanation for why this happens. Most often, colic means simply that the child is unusually sensitive to stimulation. They may not be able to "self-console" or regulate their nervous system (also known as an immature nervous system.)

Sometimes, in breastfeeding babies, colic is a sign of sensitivity to a food in the mother's diet (</English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Infant-Allergies-and-Food-Sensitivities.aspx>). The discomfort is caused only rarely by sensitivity to milk protein in formula. Colicky behavior also may signal a medical problem, such as a hernia (</English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Inguinal-Hernia.aspx>) or some type of illness.

How long does colic last?

As they mature, this inability to self-console—marked by constant crying—will improve. Generally, "colicky crying" stops by three to four months, but it can last until six months of age.

How to relieve colic symptoms

Although you simply may have to wait it out, several things might be worth trying. First, of course, consult your pediatrician to make sure that the crying is not related to any serious medical condition that may require treatment. Then ask the doctor which of the following would be most helpful.

- **If you're nursing**, you can try to eliminate milk products, caffeine, onions, cabbage and any other potentially irritating foods from your own diet. This is good to discuss with your pediatrician first. Try eliminating only one thing at a time, and expect it to take about two weeks before you may see any changes.

you're feeding formula to your baby, talk with your pediatrician about a protein hydrolysate formula. Less than 5% of colicky crying is caused by food sensitivity, but in rare cases a change may help within a few days.

- **Do not overfeed your baby**, which could make them uncomfortable. In general, try to wait at least two to two-and-a-half hours from the start of one feeding to the start of the next. [Back to Top](#)
- **Walk your baby** in a baby carrier (/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Baby-Carriers.aspx) to soothe them. The motion and body contact will reassure them, even if their discomfort persists.
- **Rock your baby**, run the vacuum in the next room, or place them where they can hear the clothes dryer, a fan or a white-noise machine. Steady rhythmic motion and a calming sound may help them fall asleep. However, never place your child on top of the washer/dryer.
- **Introduce a pacifier** (/English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Pacifiers-Satisfying-Your-Babys-Needs.aspx). While some breastfed babies will actively refuse it, it will provide instant relief for others.
- **Lay your baby tummy-down** (/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/The-Importance-of-Tummy-Time.aspx) **across your knees and gently rub their back**. The pressure against their belly may help comfort them. If they fall asleep this way, place them in their crib on their back.
- **Swaddle** (/English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/swaddling-is-it-safe.aspx) **them** in a large, thin blanket so that they feel secure and warm.

When you're feeling tense and anxious, have a family member or a friend look after the baby—and get out of the house. Even an hour or two away will help you maintain a positive attitude. If no other adult is available to help, it's OK to lay the baby on their back in the crib or another safe place and leave the room for a few minutes.

Remember

No matter how impatient or angry you become, a baby should never be shaken (/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Abusive-Head-Trauma-Shaken-Baby-Syndrome.aspx). Shaking an infant hard can cause blindness, brain damage, or even death. Let your own doctor know if you are depressed or are having trouble dealing with your emotions. They can recommend ways to help.

More information

- [How to Calm a Fussy Baby](#) (/English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Calming-A-Fussy-Baby.aspx)

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