

# MYRTLE AVENUE Pediatrics



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## COLIC

“Colic” means excessive crying in an infant 2 to 12 weeks of age who is otherwise healthy. The cause of colic is unknown. However, because many physical problems can cause excessive crying in an infant, only a doctor should make the diagnosis of colic. Other common causes of crying to consider: tiredness, pain, too cold, too hot, and clothing too tight.

### Symptoms of Colic:

Colic usually begins by 2 to 3 weeks of age and lasts up to 3 to 4 months of age. Colicky infants usually cry at least 3 hours a day. This is 2 ½ times more than non-colicky infants. The crying may or may not occur at the same time each day, but happens more often in the evening. The baby does not stop crying when usual ways of comforting, such as holding and feeding are tried.

### The colicky infant usually shows these signs:

- Flailing arms and legs
- Clenched fists
- Arched back
- Draws legs toward abdomen
- Bulging and tense abdomen (tummy)
- Struggling and angry when held

Possible causes of colic: No one knows the real cause of colic, but some things that may be related include:

- Exposure to tobacco smoke
- Stomach spasms
- Immature nervous system
- Gas pains
- Hormones out of balance
- Immature digestive system
- Allergy to milk
- Tension/emotional stress in the baby’s environment

Ways to help your baby: There is no sure treatment for colic, so nothing you try will comfort your crying baby every time.

### **Other parents who have had colicky infants have tried the following suggestions:**

- Cuddling
- Taking your baby for a ride in the stroller or car
- Placing baby in a swing (prop a young infant with blankets)
- Rocking and cuddling your baby in a rocking chair
- Giving your baby a pacifier (many infants are soothed by extra sucking)
- Burping the baby often while feeding to remove as much air as possible from the stomach and reduce excess gas. Massaging the baby's stomach.
- Playing soothing music or tapes of heartbeat (to soothe you and the baby)
- Carrying your baby in a front pack
- Walking while holding your baby.
- Running the vacuum cleaner or washer (the constant sound can be comforting to your baby)
- Dancing with your baby to some slow music
- Bathing your baby in warm water

### **Things to remember:**

A baby who cries too much despite everything you do to comfort him can make his parents nervous and angry. It is important for you to remember the following things:

- Colic is not your fault
- Your anger and frustration are normal.
- Your baby is not angry with you.
- Your baby is healthy in spite of the excessive crying.
- The crying is harmless to your baby.
- The hard crying usually improves at 2 months.

### **Other suggestions to help:**

Colic is not a minor problem. It affects 1 in 4 infants and causes the entire family a great deal of distress. Please be assured the colic will end between the infant's third and sixth month of life. Until then following suggestions may be helpful: Do not feed your baby every time he cries, arrange for a relative, friend or baby sitter to stay with the baby while you get out of the house one evening a week. Go see a movie, shop, go out to dinner or just take a walk. Try to rest when your baby naps. Enough rest will help relieve your tension, put your baby down to sleep if 3 hours has past since their last nap, and you have tried holding them for 30 minutes. Some over tired infants need to cry themselves to sleep. Try to keep your infant from sleeping over 3 to 4 hours at a time during the day. Prevent later sleep problems at night by placing your baby in the crib when he is drowsy and let him learn to self-comfort and self induced sleep.

**Caution:** NEVER SHAKE YOUR BABY. Shaking will not stop the crying and could cause serious brain damage.

**When to call the doctor:** Call the office if your baby has any of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Hard stool
- Poor weight gain
- Baby cries constantly for 2 hours
- Excessive spitting up
- Vomiting
- Blood in stools (bowel movements)
- Poor feeding
- Baby can not be comforted