

# Colic

## A Guide



Digestive discomfort is common in infants, as a baby's digestive system is still developing. It is normal for babies to pass gas, hiccup and make some grunting movements with bowel movements. True colic is rare as the definition is strict but even babies with upset tummys now and then can benefit from the therapies below. Reasons for colic are still unclear, but usually symptoms resolve by the age of 4 months—possibly because baby's gut is more mature and less sensitive.

**Symptoms: The definition of colic is rather strict as criteria include a healthy baby having unexplained fussing/crying lasting more than 3 hours a day, more than 3 days a week for more than 3 weeks.** However, many doctors and moms use the term to describe any intense periods of crying which seem to be related to an upset digestive system.

### **Diet:**

Sometimes food in a mother's diet can trigger food sensitivity in the infant. The most common food that can cause a problem is dairy milk products (cows, sheep, or goat) including milk, cheese, yogurt, and ice cream. Other foods that may trigger colic include: processed or deli meats, citrus fruits, nuts, wheat, gluten, and corn. You need to read labels carefully when trying to figure it out, and eliminate the food for 2 weeks to test for any change in the baby's symptoms. .

Some babies react to caffeine in coffee or tea, as well as to chocolate. Garlic, onion, hot peppers and cabbage can also give your baby digestive problems.

Occasionally babies can react to your prenatal vitamin. If you notice that your baby always has digestive problems about 3 to 4 hours after you take your prenatal vitamin, you may want to try switching brands.

Including probiotics, or beneficial microorganisms, in your diet can help improve your intestinal functioning and decreases the amount of allergens that leak into your bloodstream and your breastmilk. Probiotics can be bought in various supplemental forms, or can be found in cultured foods such as yogurt or sauerkraut.

*These handouts and information may be copied and distributed on the condition that the Native Breastfeeding Council ([www.nativebreastfeedingcouncil.org](http://www.nativebreastfeedingcouncil.org)) is credited and that it is not used in ANY context that violates the **WHO International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (1981)** and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions.*

### **Massage:**

Massaging your baby's abdomen can help relieve discomfort and help move gas. A full body massage can help soothe and relax your baby. Olive or almond oil can enhance the therapeutic benefit.

**Circles following colon:** As you are looking at your baby, start at the lower left of the abdomen, and move towards the right in a clockwise fashion. Repeat several times.

**Bicycle Legs:** With your baby lying on her back, take her feet and move her legs in a circular motion, just like she is pedaling a bicycle.

**Colic Hold:** Position your baby on their belly lying down along your forearm with your hand supporting their head and chest. The head should be slightly higher than the feet.

### **Teas:**

Herbal teas made of dill, fennel, anise or chamomile can be enjoyed for relaxation benefits and digestive relief. Mom can drink the tea and it will come through the breastmilk to soothe the baby's digestion. Gripe water or homeopathic Colic formulations may also be used.

Make sure to discuss with a provider who is knowledgeable about using herbal medicine with babies before giving any teas directly to the infant.

### **Warm Baths:**

Take a warm bath with your baby. Skin-to-skin contact can help soothe and quiet the infant. Bathing the infant in an infusion of lavender or chamomile, or adding a few drops of essential oil to the bath, also has soothing effects.

Make sure to get help- a baby who cries a lot can be draining. Make sure to check with your physician to ensure there is not a medical reason for the crying. Take some time to refresh yourself so you can continue to care for your baby.

*Dr. Lauren Spieler, DO is an Osteopathic Family Physician, Clinical Herbalist, and Clinical Lactation Educator in Sonoma County, California. She is a member of the Native Breastfeeding Council [www.nativebreastfeeding.org](http://www.nativebreastfeeding.org).*