

A crying baby can be stressful for many new parents, particularly as your baby can't tell you what's wrong. Here, Tamara Jenkins looks at a common condition and how to stop your little one from becoming a crybaby!

CRY BABY



While there are many reasons why a baby cries, one of the most common is colic. This generally refers to an otherwise healthy baby who cries frequently and for extended periods (more than three hours a day, three days a week), between the ages of three weeks to three months. The baby may be difficult to settle and irritable for no apparent reason.

While listening to your baby cry for hours on end can be distressing, it's important to know that you're not alone. A recent Australian study reported that 60% of parents have had babies with colic, so avoid blaming yourself if your baby isn't settling.

"Colic is a normal behaviour in babies and can be identified because it typically occurs at the same time every day, usually in the evenings, and lasts for not more than three months," says Dr Chris Pearson, who is head of General Medicine at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide.

A crying baby, however, does not automatically indicate colic. The average baby cries for about two and a half hours each day, as a way of communicating a need, whether that is hunger, thirst or pain. Reasons your baby might cry include feeding issues (too little or too much milk), wind, constipation, a dirty nappy, reflux or unsettled sleep patterns, so it's important that you try to eliminate these things first.

"Often mothers can recognise different cries in their baby. The hungry cry is different to the colic cry. The cry of pain is often that little bit more insistent and higher pitched, so those sorts of characteristics can help mothers work out why a baby is crying. It's not always easy to distinguish but experienced mothers can often identify different cries," says Dr Pearson.

The difference with colic is usually that your baby looks uncomfortable. It is thought that colic might cause pain in the baby's tummy and bowel, so you might see them arch backwards and draw

up their knees or stretch their legs out to try to combat the pain. Other tell-tale signs can include reddening of your baby's face, stomach rumblings and wind. Your baby might also seem calm one minute and then suddenly start screaming the next, often continuing for many hours.

While the exact cause is unknown, intestinal gas, food sensitivity, allergy or an immature immune system are suspected of triggering colic. Some believe that a baby's nervous system can't cope with the stimuli of everyday life and crying helps them communicate this overload.

It's also thought a mother's diet can play a role. Research shows that mothers who eliminate high-allergy foods like eggs, milk, nuts, fish and wheat from their diets for a week find that their infants cry for, on average, two hours less each day.

If you breastfeed your baby, try cutting out these foods to see if they make a difference. Other bothersome foods for a breastfed baby can include spicy dishes, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, caffeine and alcohol.

Some bottle-fed babies are sensitive to the cow's milk or soy they contain so try switching formulas to see if this helps. Nicotine, found in cigarettes, is also thought to cause colic, so whether you bottle-feed or breastfeed, quitting smoking will have a positive effect on the health of you and your baby.

Every baby is different and there are a number of treatments available to help settle your baby, including the use of swaddles or slings, warm baths and massage. ●

HELPLINES



Brauer Colic Relief (100ml \$15.99, promo \$12.79, members \$12.00) **Iberogast Oral Liquid Dyspepsia** (50ml \$22.99, promo \$18.39, members \$14.71) **Mam Anti-Colic Bottle 160ml** (\$9.99, promo \$8.99, members \$8.09) **Mam UltiVent Bottle 260ml** (\$12.99, promo \$11.69, members \$9.35) **Novolac Colic Infant Formula** (800g \$26.99, members \$21.59) **GR8X Swaddling Wrap** (\$18.99, members \$15.19) **Bubzilla Sling** (\$89.99, promo \$80.99, members \$64.79)

☑ Breast milk is best for babies. Consult your healthcare professional before using this product.

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