

- It may be useful to reduce the amount of caffeine a mother is having through coffee, tea, cola or other drinks and foods.
- Breastfeeding mothers often try to avoid foods they think upset their babies. There are no particular foods to avoid. Most mothers can eat most foods in moderation.

### Probiotics

In recent years there has been a lot of interest in the type of bacteria that grow in the bowel and the benefits of having a correct balance of 'good' bacteria (such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*) versus 'bad' bacteria.

- Babies, especially if they are breastfed, are likely to have plenty of *Lactobacillus acidophilus*.
- There is no evidence that giving acidophilus powder to breastfed or bottle fed babies helps them be more settled.
  - We do not recommend its use, but if parents are keen to try it, it is not likely to be harmful.
- It is important to only give the recommended amount, mixed with cooled boiled water for young babies.
- Some infant formulas now have probiotics added.

### For more information contact:

- Local Community Child Health Nurse
- Local Family Doctor
- Ngala Family Resource Centre Helpline  
8.00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. 7 days a week  
Telephone (08) 9368 9368  
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 111 546  
[www.ngala.com.au](http://www.ngala.com.au)
- Parent Help Centre/Parenting Line  
Telephone (08) 9272 1466 (24hr service)  
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 654 432

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# colic in babies



Many reasons are given to explain why some babies cry a lot. Colic is a popular one. However no one is sure what colic really means in babies. Colic is usually thought to be caused by wind or gas in the bowel, but there is no proof of this. Certainly the baby looks to be in pain, but we don't really know.

## Alert!

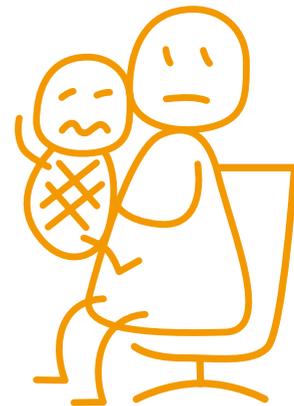
Any baby whose behaviour changes (for example, if she suddenly starts crying a lot more than usual, or she seems unwell), should be checked by a doctor in case there is a serious health problem.

## What is colic

- The word colic means spasm, or painful tightening of muscle. Crying due to infant 'colic' is often thought to be due to pain coming from the baby's tummy and bowel - but the bowel of babies with colic seems healthy.
- It is not known why many healthy young babies under three to four months of age cry so much in the late afternoon, evening or during the night. It may happen because it takes time for very young babies to adjust to the world.

The common pattern of colic is:

- The baby cries or screams for some hours, often at the end of the day.
- The baby is hard to comfort.
- The distress comes in waves. The baby seems to calm then suddenly starts screaming again.
- The baby may arch backwards and either draw the knees up or stretch the legs out stiffly.
- A baby with colic is usually calm at other times of the day, and is healthy and growing well.
- Colic usually gets better between three and four months of age.
- If a baby is very miserable at other times of the day, it may have other problems such as reflux or lactose intolerance, but many babies with these problems have a period of evening crying which seems like 'colic'. See our topic '**Reflux**'.



## What parents can do

- Check with your doctor to be sure your baby is well.
- Prepare for the difficult end of the day - for example, by getting the evening meal ready early.
- Look for ideas in the topic '**Crying Baby**'. Write out a list of things that sometimes work for your baby, and put it in a place you can see easily. Try these one by one.
- Get some support. Share caring for your baby with someone else if you can. It is good for the baby and good for you.
- If everything has been tried and your baby still cries, try to just hold him. He will sense that you are offering comfort, even if the crying goes on. A rocking chair is great for this.
- Sometimes the crying may really get to you. If this happens it is important to give the baby to someone else or put him down somewhere safe and take a break. Do something that relaxes you, have a cup of coffee or tea, play some music, read a bit. Then you will have fresh energy to go back to your baby.
- Sometimes going outside helps - for example, take your baby for a walk in the pram.

## Medicines

It is not clear how useful medicines for colic are.

- Colic gets better by itself, often quite suddenly, whether you use any medicines or not.
- If you use them, you should follow carefully the directions on the pack about how much to give and the age of the baby to use them for.
- Many medicines used for colic have a warning on the packet that they should only be used for babies under six months on medical advice. See your doctor for a check of your baby's health before using them.
- Most colic medicines have not been shown by research to be a risk for babies, but most have also not been shown to help them either. Always check before you start these medicines.

## Diet

- It is common to blame the baby's feeding or the mother's diet (if breastfeeding) for colic. However this is only rarely the cause.
- Occasionally babies are helped by removal of cow's milk and dairy products from their (or their mother's) diet. This should only be done with the help of a doctor.

