

# Common Ailments Service

## Patient Information Leaflet



# COLIC

Colic is the name for intense, frequent crying in an otherwise healthy baby. Colic affects about 1 in every 5 babies. It often starts when a baby is a few weeks old and usually stops by the time the baby is 4 to 6 months old.

Babies with colic often cry for several hours in the late afternoon or evening. They may look very upset and red in the face. Sometimes they pull their knees up to their chest or arch their back whilst crying. A baby with colic may appear to be in distress, but the crying episodes are not harmful, and the baby should continue to feed and gain weight normally.

What causes colic is not known. It could be indigestion or wind, or certain proteins or sugars in milk affecting their gut. Some people think that colicky crying is just something that some babies do at this age. Colic affects boys and girls equally, and breast-fed and formula-fed babies equally.

### How can I treat colic?

Colic will get better on its own within a few months. It is not clear whether giving medicines or herbal remedies helps.

### What can I do to help my baby?

What works for one baby may not always be helpful for another. You may like to try:

- burping your baby during and after feeds
- giving your baby a warm bath
- holding your baby while he or she is crying. If this becomes too much for you, put your baby somewhere safe, such as in their cot and take a break for a few minutes
- gentle movement - rocking your baby over your shoulder, or pushing them in their pram
- white noise – the sound of a vacuum cleaner, hairdryer or running water may calm your baby.

Remember to look after yourself. Try to rest when your baby is sleeping and take a break from time to time. Ask your family and friends for help. It may help to meet other parents with babies of the same age.

Remember that this phase will pass in a few months. Colic is not a sign that you are doing something wrong.

## Do I need to see my doctor?

See your doctor if you feel very down after having your baby, or if you feel you are unable to cope.

Get medical help immediately if your baby:

- seems floppy when you pick them up
- has a cry that is weak, high-pitched or does not stop
- turns blue, blotchy or very pale
- vomits green liquid
- has blood in their poo
- has a fit (seizure)
- has a temperature of 38°C or above if they are less than 3 months old or a temperature of 39°C or above if they are 3 to 6 months old
- has breathing problems such as breathing quickly or grunting when they breathe
- has a swelling in the soft spot at the top of their head
- stops feeding.

## Who can I contact for further advice and support?

Your health visitor will be able to advise you.

Cry-sis is a charity that supports families with crying, sleepless children:

Cry-sis Helpline: 08451 228 669 (7 days a week, 9am to 10pm)

Cry-sis website: <https://www.cry-sis.org.uk/>

## Where can I find further information?

NHS Direct Wales: [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)

NHS Direct Wales Tel: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute, in addition to telephone providers access charge.