

Colic

Colic is a state of excessive crying seen in infants typically during the late afternoon or early evening. From 15% to 20% of infants develop colic, and it seems to be more common in first-borns and in boys than in later-born infants and in girls. Colic is seen in otherwise healthy infants and can begin as early as 2 weeks of age. It is self-limited, only rarely lasting until the infant is 6 months old.

Aetiology / Risk factors

No cause has been proven for this disorder, but theories include those listed below.

- Stage in the development of an immature central nervous system or digestive system
- Response to emotional and family stress—need for comfort
- Reflection of differences in infant temperament and physiology
- Intolerance to foods in mother's diet, specifically, dairy products, caffeine, or gas-producing foods such as the brassica family (broccoli, cabbage etc), and the allium family (onions, garlic etc)
- Introducing food into infant's diet too early
- Over-stimulation or under-stimulation of infant
- Second-hand smoke
- Antibiotics given at birth or to mother during labour

Signs and Symptoms

- Inconsolable crying that lasts more than three hours for three or more days a week in a healthy infant 2 weeks to 3 months of age
- Crying accompanied by vigorous kicking, pulling the legs up tightly to the body, and making tight fists
- May have swollen or distended stomach, burp, or pass gas often
- Infant appears to be in pain
- Arched back and clenched fists
- Frequent vomiting after feeding

Diet and Lifestyle

Because there is no identified cause, treatment involves finding what is effective from among the items listed below:

- For a breast-fed infant, decrease the time between nursing sessions (nurse on demand) and mother should eliminate dairy products, caffeine, energy drinks, high fructose juices/drinks and all foods that give the mother gas (sensitive foods may include citrus, spicy foods, and soy).
- For a bottle-fed infant, change to a Goat Milk formula. May need hypoallergenic formula.
- Do not offer solid foods to the infant before 6 months of age.
- Take breaks with other adults you trust if the crying becomes unbearable and call someone immediately if you fear you may harm the baby.

- Review different methods of burping.
- A tea made from fennel seed (*Foeniculum vulgare*) or anise seed (*Pimpinella anisum*) may be administered directly to the infant (1 tsp. before and after feedings) or drunk by the breast-feeding mother (1 cup three to six times/day). Both fennel and anise act as gastrointestinal relaxants and help to expel gas. Ensure it is cooled before administration to baby.
- Other herbs that have relaxing effects and help reduce colic are lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*), catnip (*Nepeta cataria*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), and linden flower (*Tilia cordata*). These may be added to the above tea as needed.
- Osteopathic and Homoeopathic treatment may be helpful

Pathology Tests

In the absence of poor feeding, diarrhoea, weight loss, fever; black, green, or bloody stools in an infant less than 2 months old, or the persistence of crying beyond 6 months of age, no laboratory tests are needed.

If you have any questions or would like to set up an appointment to discuss your health issues, receive nutritional guidance for you and your family, look into possible food allergies and intolerances, or any other aspect of your health, please contact us (details below).

Parnell Natural Health
532 Parnell Road, Parnell, Auckland
phone 09 300 6066

Heal Clinic
17 Routly Avenue, Pukekohe
phone 021 367 103

meryn@healnaturally.co.nz · www.healnaturally.co.nz

naturopath
heal