

# Infantile Colic

Nick R. Patel, MD Rev 3/2010  
Family Medicine, ECU Physicians

## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

### Symptoms/Definition



- Healthy, well-fed infant
- No medical cause found for crying is found
- Crying uncontrollably for more than 3 hours a day, 3 days a week, for more than 2 weeks
- Age when colic starts: 2 weeks to 4 months of age.
- Boys and girls are affected equally
- About 1 in 4 children will have this condition
- Predictable crying at the same time every day, usually late afternoon or evening
- Intense crying that is louder or variable in pitch. Red flushed face and can't soothe the baby

### What to do for your baby

- Soothe your baby – hold and rock him/her in a chair, walk with the baby, go for a drive with a vibrating infant car seat (gentle rhythmic motions)
- Give your baby a pacifier
- Cuddle your baby or swaddle him/her in a light soft blanket
- Try placing the baby near “white noise” – for example vacuum cleaner, white noise machine, ticking clock, calming music, or the noise of the clothes dryer (never put car seat on top of dryer)
- **Employ the 5 “S’s” (need to be done at the same time)**
  - **Swaddling**
  - **Side/stomach: laying baby on side or stomach**
  - **Shushing: using white noise as above**
  - **Swinging: rhythmic motion as above**
  - **Sucking: sucking on finger or pacifier**
- Feed your baby smaller, more frequent portions, switch to a different formula (1-2 week trial), use low air/curved bottles, avoid over and under feeding

### Causes & Risk Factors

- Exact cause is unknown
- One proven risk factor for colic is **smoking**
- Factors that may play a role:
  - Infant GERD/Reflux
  - Allergy to milk
  - Swallowing air during crying, feeding or sucking
  - Inadequate burping after feeding
  - Family tension, parental anxiety, depression, &/or fatigue
  - Immature digestive system
  - Difficulty adjusting to day & night schedule

### Coping and Outcomes when Dealing with Colic:

- Colic is just as exhausting for parents as it is for the baby. Take a break, ask for help from your partner, relatives, or friends.
- Stay positive, your baby's colic does not mean you are a bad parent and is not the result of bad parenting.
- Usually subsides by 3-6 months of age, has no bearing on baby's intelligence or future development. Colic will go away by itself.
- Express your feelings and confide in your partner or another good listener. Talk to your physician as another person to support you.
- Infants may cry more if they sense your tension or anxiety. Speak with your physician about ideas to help with dealing with anxiety or tension
- NEVER SHAKE A BABY – put the baby in the crib and leave alone for a short period of time if you need a break
- Schedule frequent visits to see your physician if needed.