

# COLIC BABY? problem solved

So, the first two weeks were bliss but lately your baby is pulling her knees up, balling her fists and having bouts of niggling or screaming. We tell you how to treat colic

BY DR MIKE MARINUS

**Y**ou've heard about this colic thing and hope against hope that that's not what this is. First, you run through your crying checklist once... twice... three times. If you find yourself out of options and the bouts began out of the blue at around two weeks then your first stop is at your paediatrician's office to make sure that's all this is. There are conditions that present much as colic does, but with serious effects on your baby's health. The cornerstone of the treatment of colic is that your baby is healthy with no underlying issues. Once you know you're dealing with colic, your action plan can kick in.

## Winding

Winding is the first issue I tackle with any new mother. It is not something that always comes naturally to parents and can be a huge factor in colicky behaviour. Winds that are not broken create tension within the stomach and don't allow baby to relax into a deep sleep. This can lead to overtiredness and add to colicky behaviour.

There are various techniques available, some of which will work for

you and some which won't, but persevere until you find the one that fits you and your baby. You have up to 20 minutes to wind your baby after a feed so don't give up too quickly – 20 minutes now may mean three hours more sleep later. An effective trick I use is to lay baby down and bicycle her legs for 10 seconds after I've winded for about five minutes – this releases gas pockets from the dome of the stomach – and then lift her up again into a seated position and continue.

## Medication

If your paediatrician advises medication, make sure you understand what it

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does and why your baby is taking it. However, trying to remember all that he or she explains to you while your baby is screaming her head off during the consultation and you battle porridge brain is most likely not going to work, so ask your doctor to write down a short explanation for you to refer to later.

Friends and family will undoubtedly also throw products into the ring that worked for their children, but keep in mind that many of these products are specific to certain physiological functions within your baby's body. It is important to understand the difference between the lactase drops your paediatrician advised and the probiotics that worked so well for Auntie Sue's baby. Colicky behaviour can stem from conditions as diverse as reflux, gastrointestinal spasm, food intolerance, immaturity, and the list goes on. So if you are deciding to try a new medication, speak to a healthcare professional to get a good idea of what this new medication does, how safe it is and how it will interact with other products.

## Diet

Certain ingredients in foods, such as dairy, chocolate, citrus, caffeine and peanuts can make their way through breastmilk to your baby and upset her. There are many sources for good breastfeeding diets, but if you are

## DID YOU KNOW?

We all know that breast is best, but for those moms with babies on formula, you need to have your wits about you when deciding to switch brands to ease your baby's discomfort. It is tempting, but try not to chop and change too much while you gather as much info as you can about which products are intended for which babies. Some preparations are highly specialised and designed for specific children with specific needs – they can result in unwanted reactions in other kiddies.

concerned about one or two types of food that you think could be causing trouble, speak to your clinic sister about them to find out if you should be concerned.

When trying to work out if a certain type of food is affecting your baby, go off it for a week and try slowly introducing it back into your diet. Only try one at a time to avoid confusion.

## Alternative medicine

In my practice I work hand in hand with local homeopaths, with some amazing results from their remedies. If this form of treatment is more your style, I would

suggest consulting with a homeopath or naturopath to get an idea of how these treatments work before arriving at a health store and picking out a remedy yourself.

## Manual therapy

The gentle mobilisations and manipulations of babies in manual therapy are aimed at reducing birth stress on babies' spinal joints and muscles, and regulating the flow of the nerves from the spine to the rest of the body. In my experience this has the effect of allowing the baby to regulate her bodily functions (basically, the gastrointestinal tract) more effectively. Consequently even non-colicky babies treated with manual therapy show signs of being calmer and less fussy after treatment.

Studies show that the side effects of such manipulation, when performed by competent practitioners, are negligible. There are chiropractic, osteopathy, physiotherapy and cranio-sacral therapy practitioners who specialise in the treatment of babies so ask your local baby clinic, GP, paediatrician or friends who they would recommend. ●

## RESOURCES

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## We asked our moms: How did you survive colic in your baby?

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**NATASHA RONALD** I used to fill up the baby bath with warm water and put her in tummy down, immersing her whole body except her head of course, just for a few minutes. Then I'd wrap her up in a towel (quickly put nappy on) and rocked her to sleep. That usually did the trick, but thankfully only one of my three children had it.

**SHARVANA NAIDOO** We took her to the chiro and also used Telement drops and gripe water. It helped quite a bit, but it was still a nightmarish few months!

**DONNA ROBERTS** We had nearly a year of hell with our little boy. Thousands of rands on medical opinions, but what worked

was holding him and softly bouncing on a trampoline, the chiropractor and what finally cured it was cranio-sacral therapy. The good news is that he is the most amazing child now, a treasure.

**ILKE DE VILLIERS** The best advice is to ask for help, have somebody take baby a few hours so you maintain your sanity! It will pass, even though I wanted to slap every person who told me so!

**NTOMBI MALAZA** Those are days I'd rather not remember! I used to think my baby hated me, but he outgrew it after five long months.