

## **What Is Colic**

Colic is the general name given to a range of infant digestive disorders, not a single condition. Studies have shown that 25-40% of babies suffer from colic, which can range from mild to severe. Stress during pregnancy and during delivery i.e. assisted delivery can cause colic symptoms. It includes several different types of digestive problems; reflux, gut irritability, lactose intolerance and allergy. Each of these types of colic has different signs and symptoms and needs to be treated and managed in different ways. Signs of colic may start soon after birth, at 6-8 weeks after the birth the symptoms may peak.

*Things to look out for include;*

- The earliest sign of colic is that the baby is very flatulent (farty) and the stools are explosive.
- The baby is obviously uncomfortable and often in pain.
- The stomach is distended and loud gurgling sounds can be heard.
- The baby may arch his back during a colic attack, and bring knees up to the chest.
- The baby may cry inconsolable for several hours, early evening being the most common time for an attack.
- The baby may just be restless and uncomfortable but not crying.

## **How to help your baby cope with colic**

It is sometimes better to feed an infant with reflux more frequently, little and often can help.

Feeding the baby whilst holding in a more upright position may help. Change the position you breastfeed in, change hold i.e. rugby ball hold.

Keep baby upright for 30 mins after a feed.

Wind regularly during a feed. Trapped wind in the stomach may well make the baby uncomfortable.

When laying the baby down, raise the head end of the mattress, with a towel or small cushion under the mattress.

Baby massage can help relax and calm the baby, try to massage before the baby gets too distressed.

Reflexology for babies can help give parents relevant points on the foot to address the gut and ease discomfort.

Breastfed babies; the mothers diet can affect the gut i.e. broccoli, cabbage, lettuce and bananas are difficult to digest for the baby. Spicy food can also upset the baby's digestion

Limit caffeine i.e. coffee, tea and chocolate, which act as a stimulant on the gut. For lactose intolerant babies limit dairy products. Bottle fed babies; try not to keep changing formulas, it takes several days for the baby to get used to different milk. There are a few 'easy to digest' formulas available which are worth trying.

Medication: Infacol is an anti-spasmodic medication it slows down the motion of the gut. Gripe water is an old remedy that has been around for many years and can help some babies. Colief can help lactose intolerant babies. For reflux there are two medications, which have to be prescribed by your doctor these include Infant Gaviscon and Domperidon and Omeprazole, which suppress or reduce the amount of acid produced in the stomach.

### **Osteopathic Cranial treatment**

Cranial osteopathy is often effective at relieving the symptoms of infantile colic. Osteopaths treat the whole body of the baby to relieve and release any areas of tension. Treatment is very gentle; they often fall asleep during or after treatment. Treatment looks at the stresses and strains that are placed on the body during birth. Long, slow, fast deliveries, inductions, caesarian sections or assisted deliveries i.e. forceps and ventouse, the position of baby i.e. back-to-back can also cause these stresses and strains on the body. The osteopath will look at tension in the diaphragm and upper gut, which irritates the oesophageal sphincter and causes heartburn. The base of the head gets 'squashed' during the exit of the birth canal. Here lies the vagus nerve, which supplies the stomach. If this is irritated it can cause gut discomfort. The osteopath will look at how the gut moves, are there any spasms or twists causing the baby discomfort. Treatment usually consists of two or three sessions in which the osteopath works to restore a sense of balance, harmony and relaxation of the whole body. Advice and support is also given to the parents. Most babies do grow out of this condition after the first three months but some not until they are weaned. Osteopathic treatment just speeds this process up and helps to relax the baby sooner.

For any more information or advice please contact:

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