

QUERIES ON COLIC

Colic is a common albeit exasperating condition characterised as excessive crying or extended and repeated periods of crying or fussing in babies who are otherwise healthy and thriving. It affects both baby boys as well as baby girls equally. The most telling sign of colic is the crying and it's most likely to begin in the late afternoon or early evening although they can occur at any time of the day or night. We turned to Dr. Phang Yuk Jean, Consultant Pediatrician at Columbia Asia Hospital – Klang for some much-needed answers and here's what we got.



Dr. Phang Yuk Jean



Q1. HOW CAN YOU TELL IF A BABY IS EXPERIENCING COLIC?

"Rule of three": Crying for more than three hours per day, for more than three days per week, and for longer than three weeks from an infant who is well-fed and otherwise healthy, is probably because of colic. Colicky infants have attacks of inconsolable crying/ screaming in the evening with associated motor behaviors such as flushed face, furrowed brow, and clenched fists. The legs are pulled up to the abdomen, and the infants emit a piercing, high-pitched scream.

Q2. IS COLIC HARMFUL TO A BABY'S HEALTH?

Colic is not harmful for babies. Colic is self-limiting with no long-term adverse effects but parents are advised to seek

professional advice; history and patient examination need to be done to rule out all possible organic causes — central nervous system/ gastrointestinal/ infection/ trauma. These need to be followed-up on.

Q3. WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO SOOTHE A BABY WITH COLIC?

Treatment choices are limited. It's not advisable to change feeding methods (breastfeed/formula) but if strong family history of atopy/ or suspected cow's milk protein allergy, (CMPA) is detected, you can try hydrolyzed milk. Medications have not been proven to be effective to treat colic. Most behavior interventions have not been proven to be more effective than placebos either. You can attempt to calm a crying baby (behavioural interventions) by moving to a darker, quieter room, swaddling with a blanket, gentle massages, touch or a gentle tummy rub. You can also try soothing sounds or movements such as rocking. Parents need to understand that their baby is healthy and that colic is self-limiting with no long-term adverse effects. Avoid shaking the baby vigorously, no matter how stressful the situation gets. This can cause shaken baby syndrome. Parents/ caretaker should try taking turns to care for the baby.

Q4. ARE THERE ANY TRADITIONAL REMEDIES THAT MAY HELP?

For breastfeeding moms, a maternal low-allergen diets i.e. low in dairy, soy, egg, peanut, wheat, shellfish — may help to relieving symptoms of colic.

Q5. DO ALL BABIES EXPERIENCE COLIC?

Although colic cannot be prevented, fortunately not all babies experience it. Only about 5 to 25% of babies will have colic.