

Infant presenting with repeated episodes of excessive and inconsolable crying

- Started in the first weeks of life
- Growing normally
- No evidence of fever or illness or red flags
- Crying most often occurs in the late afternoon or evening
- The baby draws its knees up to its abdomen or arches its back when crying

Consider differential diagnosis if sudden onset
See also [Unsettled Baby Pathway](#)

History and examination:

- General health of the baby including physical examination
- Antenatal and perinatal history
- Features of the crying
- Feeding and sleeping patterns
- Nature of the stools
- Mother's diet if breastfeeding
- Family history of allergy (see Allergy Focused History ([Click here](#)))
- Parent's response to the baby's crying / mental health
- Factors which lessen or worsen the crying
- Possible signs of maltreatment

Treatable causes:

- Hunger or thirst
- Too hot / too cold / too itchy
- Nappy rash
- Poor feeding technique
- Wind (Ensure infant is upright if bottle feeding)
- Constipation if bottle fed
- Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (See [GORD](#) section)
- Cow's Milk Protein Allergy (See [CMPA](#) section)
- Transient lactose intolerance (see lactose section)
- Parental depression or anxiety
- Mother's intake if breastfeeding (anecdotal, e.g. medication, high intake of caffeine/alcohol/certain foods)
- Rare serious causes (seizures, cerebral palsy, chromosomal abnormality)

Treatable causes excluded

Management:

Reassure and acknowledge (do not ignore/dismiss concerns)

Colic usually resolves by 6 months, with no evidence of long term problems

Offer ongoing support and review

Advise on soothing strategies one at a time, e.g.:

Holding baby through crying (although putting the baby somewhere safe is sometimes needed)

Gentle motion /rocking

White noise

Bathing in warm water

Never shake a baby

Encourage parents to look after their own health and access appropriate support

Encourage to continue breastfeeding wherever possible

Do not recommend Simeticone, Lactase drops, Probiotics, Herbal supplements, Spinal manipulation or Cranial osteopathy due to lack of good quality evidence and risk of harm

Refer to specialist services if parent unable to cope

Click [here](#) for more information