

PARENT EDUCATION

Gas and Colic

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Gas is very common in the first month of life. Most of the time, it is not related to the kind of formula, but occasionally, it is due to the lactose in cow's milk formula not being digested completely. Gas is so common, though, that changing the cow's milk formula for every baby with gas means changing it for most babies. Lactose intolerance has other signs and symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea, and severe diaper rash. In the absence of these signs and a negative family history, lactose intolerance is unlikely and changing the formula should be a last resort not the first thing that comes to mind. Sometimes no action is smarter than a jerky change in formula every time the baby spits, is constipated, or has a bad day of gas.

Excessive crying and gas more than three hours a day is called colic. Gas can cause bloating, which is uncomfortable enlargement of the abdomen. Bloating is not dangerous by itself, but if it is associated with vomiting, not spitting, can be a sign of the dangerous bowel obstruction. In the absence of vomiting, gas and bloating are not dangerous, and should not be a cause of panic.

PREVENTION

Gas can be prevented partially by:

- 1). Using special bottles.
- 2). Burping the baby often every half an ounce.
- 3). Preventing the baby from feeding too fast.
- 4). Using nipples with large holes.
- 5). Avoiding overfeeding and underfeeding.
- 6). Feeding the baby upright.
- 7). If you are breastfeeding, avoid certain foods like onions, garlic, beans, peas, spices, and chicken.

TREATMENT

It can be treated with:

- 1). Medications like Simethicone (hyoscyamine is more dangerous).
- 2). Gentle vibrations.
- 3). Laying the baby prone across the lap or on a warm water bottle or heating pad.
- 4). Lifting the baby's knees up to the sides of the abdomen to help the baby get rid of the gas.
- 5). Occasionally giving the baby a glycerin suppository.
- 6). Giving the baby gripe water or chamomile tea.
- 7). Sleep tight infant soother.
- 8). Background noise.
- 9). Swaddling.
- 10). Using special predigested formulas like Nutramigen.
- 11). There is new evidence that a probiotic called *Lactobacillus reuteri* 5 drops once a day 30 minutes after a feeding works in 95% of babies with colic.

IMPORTANT

Crying can be from gas but it can cause gas. A baby can cry from another reason, and in the process, swallows a lot of gas. It is very important that the baby be checked very carefully to rule out other reasons for crying, especially reflux that can present like colic. Crying can be also due to hernia, sickness, fractures, withdrawal from what the mother used during pregnancy, or from even a hair in the eye or wrapped around a toe. Colic feeds on mother anxiety, so it is very important that the mother stays calm while handling a crying baby, otherwise, things will get worse. Remember that most reasons for crying are benign, and colic will resolve when the baby is 3-4 months old.