

I N F A N T M A S S A G E

Colic

Colic can be defined as uncontrollable, extended crying in babies who are otherwise healthy and well-fed. All babies cry, but when they cry for more than three hours a day, three to four days a week, they are said to have colic. The main symptom of colic is continuous crying for long periods of time. This crying can occur at any time of day but it usually gets worse at night. It's not believed that colic is caused by pain although a colicky baby may look uncomfortable or appear to be in pain. They may lift their head, draw their legs up to their abdomen, pass gas and become red-faced. Poor sleep habits are also common.

It can be quite distressing for a parent to watch their infant suffering from the symptoms of colic, as their baby can appear to be quite uncomfortable and in pain. One method that can bring relief to some infants experiencing colic is massage. The reason why it often gets results is because colic is more than likely due to an immature digestive tract. Massage to your baby's chest and tummy can assist with stimulating digestion, and reduce the symptoms of colic. In addition, your baby will probably have a lot of trapped gas that is causing additional discomfort. If this is the case then massage will help the baby pass the gas which in turn will reduce the symptoms.

Massage you baby's chest and tummy

Massage can be used to help encourage stimulation of your baby's digestive system. Before starting any massage on your baby:

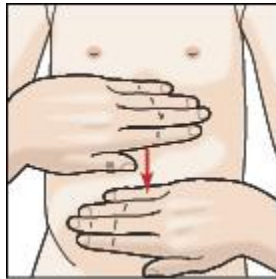
- * Ensure the room is warm enough (especially if removing your child's clothing)
- * Warm your hands by rubbing them together, or running them under some warm water for a few minutes
- * Create a relaxing environment by performing massage in a comforting room with familiar surrounding, such as favourite toys or music to keep your baby as relaxed as possible
- * Remain relaxed yourself

You can massage over clothing, but for infant massage, we would recommend you use a little oil (about the size of a 10 cent piece in your palm) and massage directly on the skin. The warmth of the skin to skin contact can be very helpful for stimulating digestion as well. It is also a great way to bond and interact with your baby.

For oil – use baby oil or all natural vegetable or fruit based oil. Good choices that you may already have at home include: grape seed oil or olive oil. Put a small drop of oil in your hands, and rub together to warm. Show your baby what you are doing, this way they'll start to associate the sight and sound with what comes next.

When doing these massage strokes, use a firm but gentle pressure. Always observe your baby to make sure they are comfortable with the massage. Feel free to try a lighter pressure or use a different stroke as you become more confident. Cease massage if your baby becomes agitated.

Begin your massage with a popular massage technique called the Paddlewheel. Place your baby on their back and your hand on their chest. Your fingers can be pointing either up towards their chin, or slightly horizontal over your baby's chest. Then, gently yet firmly rake your hand down your baby's belly all the way to the groin. As your hand is halfway down begin with your other hand for constant stimulation. Do this five to 10 times remembering to be gentle yet firm.



Once you have completed this, try the following technique to help move any gas or build up in your baby's digestive tract. This move requires a little finesse because your baby may not want to work with you. Push your baby's legs into a sharp angle so their heels are touching their bottom. Then, keeping the legs bent push the thighs down to their belly. Be gentle when moving your baby's legs into this position. Then, hold your baby by the ankles and begin moving the legs up and down so that their knees gradually unbend and end up straight again. Do this five or 10 times.

Finally, this last technique is great for getting your baby to pass gas. This is also a good move to assist with relieving constipation in your baby. Simply place your palm and fingers on your baby's belly and move them in a circular clockwise motion. This helps get the gas moving in the right direction. As soon as your baby passes gas they should feel much better.

