

# Colic

Not all babies are a bundle of joy. Sometimes the first few months of life can be very trying for parents and child. It all begins with prolonged screaming attacks and irritability. These babies have problems feeding, drawing up their legs and going red in the face. This is **colic** and it usually starts about three months and is often worse in the evening (hence the old names evening colic and three month colic).

Usually the standard remedies such as Infacol, gripe water and Colief have been tried without success. Sometimes swaddling can be a big help.

However most moderate to severe colic is usually caused by **cow's milk intolerance**. The solution, if baby is bottle-fed, is to use an alternative milk (see below) or if mum is breast-feeding, for her to stop taking milk products. Clues to cow's milk intolerance are catarrh and constipation.

Sometimes it gets much more complicated and other food intolerances are involved. Occasionally these can be multiple. I have seen babies who are intolerant to a combination of wheat, milk, corn, beef and soya before now. In these situations, the solution is an allergy-free formula milk or if mum wants to continue breast-feeding an exclusion diet (**See Food Intolerance leaflet**).

## **Allergy-Free Formula Feeds**

The first milk to try is lactose-free milk such as **SMA LF** which works well if the problem is simply a lactose intolerance (Colief will also help with this). However often this is not enough and the next step is to use an allergy-free milk. The two most commonly-used are **Nutramigen** and **Neocate**. These work well in cow's milk intolerance.

Nutramigen is usually given as it is three times less expensive. However Nutramigen contains corn and this can be a problem for a baby with multiple intolerances. So if this is not working switching to Neocate may help.

## **Other Reasons for Colic**

In my experience milk intolerance is the commonest but not the only cause. Sometimes overfeeding with formula can cause symptoms and a trial on less feeds is worth considering. In addition, some of mum's hormones and neurotransmitters will end up in the breast milk. So if mum

is under a lot of stress and pumping out adrenaline this will affect her milk and make baby more irritable too.

About 60% of children with cow's milk intolerance will be able to tolerate milk by three years of age. However, the intolerance may reappear (in another form) if the frequency and quantity of milk products they are given is too high.