

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Team Chiropractic GTA

Eight Ways to Prevent Infantile Colic

New parents have enough to contend with — without having to deal with non-stop crying! If your bundle of joy keeps you up all night, fussing and wailing, you're not alone. Infantile colic affects millions of newborns.



Excessive crying, intestinal problems, a strong sucking urge, flatulence and abdominal distention are the hallmarks of this common condition.

While the exact cause of colic is unknown (researchers speculate that several factors may aggravate the disorder), many all-natural approaches provide swift relief for colicky babies. Because chiropractic care focuses on prevention, your doctor at Team Chiropractic GTA Centre teaches parents how to stave off colic.

1. Start with the Spine

Doctors of chiropractic, like your doctor at Team Chiropractic GTA Centre, regularly care for babies with colic — and see exceptional results.

Colicky infants often have subtle misalignments in the bones of their spines (vertebrae). These dysfunctional segments are known as *vertebral subluxations*. Your doctor at

Team Chiropractic GTA Centre corrects vertebral subluxations with safe and effective maneuvers called *chiropractic adjustments*.

Many parents worry that chiropractic adjustments are “too rough” for newborns. What these parents don’t realize is that doctors of chiropractic use extremely gentle, modified techniques when caring for infants. Pediatric chiropractic adjustments involve the slightest pressure applied with only the fingertips — less force than is produced when a baby is lifted or gently rocked.

What’s more, scientific research supports the link between colic and spinal health.

“Spinal manipulation [chiropractic adjustment] is effective in relieving infantile colic,” concluded one report. This Danish study enrolled infants who were diagnosed with colic. For a period of two weeks, half of the subjects received chiropractic adjustments, while the other half were given the drug dimethicone (*Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* 1999; 22:517).

“From trial day 5 onward the manipulation group did significantly better than the dimethicone group,” the scientists wrote. Specifically, by the end of the experiment, crying had plummeted 2.7 hours per day in the chiropractic group. In contrast, crying dropped only one hour per day in the dimethicone group.

In another survey of 132 parents of infants with colic, 91 percent reported improvement after an average of two to three chiropractic adjustments (*European Journal of Chiropractic* 1985;33:264-5).

The good news doesn’t end there. In a three-month analysis of 316 babies with colic, 94 percent benefited from chiropractic adjustments (*Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* 1989;12:281-8).

2. Breastfeed Baby

In most instances, breastfed babies are less likely to experience colic, compared with bottle-fed infants (*Archives of Disease in Childhood* 2000;83:302-3). However, some infants are allergic to mother’s milk. These allergies often disappear when mom learns to restrict intake of particular foods (see “Watch Your Diet” on the next page).

If you do bottle-feed, choose a hypoallergenic formula that does not contain cow’s protein.

3. Feed Baby Upright

Feeding position can significantly influence a newborn’s risk of colic. Babies should be held in an upright posture during feeding to prevent excessive intake of air and burped following feeding. If you use a bottle, make sure to choose one specifically designed to limit air bubbles.

Some new mothers benefit from meeting with a midwife or lactation consultant to perfect breastfeeding techniques, such as how to prevent their babies from swallowing air while nursing.

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4. Watch Your Diet

Moms who breastfeed — particularly those who breastfeed colicky babies — should pass up specific foods, suggest scientists. Research indicates that mothers should steer clear of caffeinated beverages, garlic, gas-producing vegetables, spicy foods and dairy products.

Cow's milk protein is an especially potent colic-provoking culprit, according to several studies. For instance, one report found that symptoms completely disappeared in 24 of 27 newborns with severe colic that were fed a diet free of cow's milk (*Pediatrics* 1989;83:262-6).

Trade Apple for Grape Juice

Parents of infants with colic should avoid feeding their little ones apple juice — opting, instead, for white grape juice, according to a recent report in the journal *Pediatrics*.

The study looked at 30 infants, between the ages of four and six months, 16 of whom had a history of colic. The babies were separated into two groups; one group was fed four ounces of white grape juice, while the other group drank an equivalent amount of apple juice.

“We found that the babies with a history of colic who drank apple juice exhibited significantly more crying during the study, expended more energy, slept less, and were less able to digest the carbohydrates in the juices,” explains study co-author, Debora Duro, M.D. “However, among the babies who drank white grape juice, there were [sic] no real differences in symptoms between

those who had colic and those who didn't — white grape juice was well-tolerated.” (*Pediatrics* 2002;109:797-805).

6. Kick the Habit

Exposing kids to cigarette smoke increases their odds of developing asthma, cancer and cardiovascular disease. If that isn't enough to motivate mothers to kick the habit, consider this: Women who smoke are twice as likely to have babies with colic, compared with nonsmoking moms, researchers report (*Archives of Disease in Childhood* 2000;83:302-3).

As part of the study, investigators interviewed 3,345 mothers about their smoking habits. The women also answered questions about whether or not they breastfed their youngsters and how often their infants exhibited symptoms of colic. Findings showed that babies whose mothers smoked between 15 and 50 cigarettes a day were twice as likely to have colic than babies of non-smoking mothers.

7. Make Time for Massage

Massage can help newborns develop a regular sleep cycle — which may mean more hours of uninterrupted sleep for mothers of colicky infants (*Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* 2002;23:410-15).

“The results of the present study show a clear, long-term effect of massage therapy on the development of circadian rhythm,” says study author Sari Goldstein Ferber, Ph.D. Israeli researchers looked at 16 mothers and their babies. Participants

were assigned to one of two groups. In the treatment group, mothers massaged their infants for 30 minutes at bedtime for 14 days, beginning at 10 to 14 days following birth. A control group did not massage their newborns.

The eight-week-old infants in the massage group exhibited an activity pattern that was more closely aligned with their mothers. Researchers also found higher nighttime melatonin production (a hormone associated with regular sleep cycles) at the age of 12 weeks in the massaged infants.

“Massage therapy by mothers . . . serves as a strong time cue, helping infants coordinate their developing circadian system with environmental cues,” Dr. Ferber notes. “The current findings highlight the importance of mother-infant interactions and environmental cues for the development of the infant.”

Another study indicates that electric crib vibrators are as effective as massage for quelling colic (*Pediatrics* 2000;105:e84).

Reflexology — an ancient technique where specific points on the foot are massaged — has also been shown to alleviate colic (*Ugeskr Laeger* 2001;163:3773-8).

8. Quiet Down

Today's frenzied lifestyles subject families to non-stop activity. This constant bombardment of stimuli rubs off on babies — triggering anxiety and colic.

Studies suggest that reducing activity and exposure to stimuli such as music, television and light — especially prior to bedtime, can keep infants colic-free (*BMJ* 1998;316:1563-9).

Why Try All-Natural Remedies Rather Than Medication?

Three medications are commonly prescribed for infantile colic: simethicone, dicyclomine and cimetropium.

Research reveals that simethicone (the active ingredient in most gas drops) is not beneficial, compared with placebo (*BMJ* 1998;23:1563-9).

Extremely serious side effects have been associated with dicyclomine and cimetropium, including blurred vision; eye paralysis; fainting; headache; inability to urinate; itching; labored, difficult breathing; lack of coordination; lack or loss of appetite; nasal stuffiness or congestion; numbness; rapid heartbeat; rash; severe allergic reaction; sluggishness; sneezing; suffocation; temporary cessation of breathing; nausea; and vomiting.

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