

You Deserve a REST

Some babies seem to cry all the time. No matter what you try to do to soothe your baby, she just can't be comforted. She may also turn red, clench her fists, draw her legs up towards her tummy and scream. Your pediatrician has checked her out and told you he's healthy. Every remedy – from changing formula to pain medication – has failed. And things are getting worse. Your baby probably has colic.

Colic is excessive, inconsolable crying in an otherwise healthy and thriving young infant. Though the cause is not known, many physicians theorize that colic is a normal part of infant development exaggerated in some babies. Extreme irritability may represent a phase in the infant's development when he is not yet able to regulate his responses. Although colic is a common condition affecting 15.3 percent of young infants, nothing is as unnerving and frustrating to parents of a healthy baby.

If your baby has colic, you need REST (Regulation – Entrainment – Structure – Touch), a regimen proven to help babies develop self-soothing abilities.

Regulation: Try to identify sounds, movements, and touches that will reduce the infant's level of irritability before full arousal occurs. This will help your baby shift into various phases more easily.

Entrainment: Create an environment for the infant that matches the baby's behavior. If he is sleeping, for example, keep the lights off, make sure it is quiet and minimize the activity level in the household.

Structure: Create a predictable and repetitive daily routine for feeding, bathing and sleeping as much as possible.

Touch: Try holding your baby so that he is skin-to-skin or chest-to-chest. Try the vertical position or the football hold along with gentle, slow, up and down movements that may be soothing to the baby.

REST works for adults too:

Reassurance: Have your baby checked by your pediatrician to verify that she is healthy. Be sure she doesn't have a fever, is gaining adequate weight, and isn't hungry. Have confidence in the fact that colic usually disappears by four months of age and won't last forever.

Empathy: You are not alone. We understand how frustrated and helpless your baby's behavior makes you feel. This is a very challenging time as a parent and one can feel very alone and helpless. You will get through it.

Support: Ask for help. Talk to your friends or family members about your frustration. Share the

baby care with your partner. Your pediatrician and pediatric nurses can provide emotional support too. Muster all the support you can to assist you during this challenging time.

Timeout:

Schedule time for yourself each day to do the things that help you relax and/or rest. If the baby is sleeping, you may want to nap no matter what the time of day. Arrange for “coverage” each day with a friend or family member so you have a guaranteed break from your baby for an hour or two.

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