

Gassy Baby - Normal

Definition

- All babies pass lots of gas.
- Having gas in the gut is normal.
- Most gas is from swallowed air.

Health Information

Symptoms

- All babies are somewhat gassy.
- Their tummies make lots of noise as milk and air pass through.
- They easily release gas from above and below (burping and farting).
- Gas does not cause pain or crying. Blaming gas for crying is an old myth.

Causes

- **Swallowed Air from Sucking.** Babies swallow air while sucking on a bottle. They swallow more air if they suck on a nipple that is too small or clogged. Sucking on an empty bottle, pacifier, thumb, or blanket will also cause air swallowing.
- **Swallowed Air from Crying.** Babies swallow air during crying. The more babies cry, the more air they swallow. The more gas they pass.
- **Immature Gut.** For the first months of life, milk passes quickly through a baby's gut. Not much of the swallowed air has time to get absorbed. Most comes out with the poops.

Myths about Gas

- Swallowed air (normal gas) does not cause pain. It does not become trapped. It can easily escape from above or below.
- Gas passing through normal intestines does not cause crying. That's why burping a baby doesn't help the crying.
- Gas does not cause sleep problems.
- Colic is not caused by gas. Sometimes, feeding too much is the cause.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Every baby is gassy.
- Normal gas does not cause pain or crying.
- Simple steps can keep babies from having extra gas.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Reduce Air Swallowing

- Make sure bottles have no air near the nipple during feeding.
- Feed your baby in a more upright position.
- Use a pacifier less often. Save it to help with crying.

3. **Don't Over-Feed**

- Some babies cry because of a bloated stomach from getting too much formula. This is less common with breastfeeding.
- Let your baby decide when they've had enough milk. For example, your baby turns their head away.
- Don't encourage your baby to finish all that's in the bottle.

4. **Burping is Optional**

- Burping your baby during feedings is optional. It may decrease spitting up but won't help crying.
- It is not harmful if your baby does not burp. Babies can burp on their own if they need to.
- If you want to burp your baby, hold upright and pat gently on the back after a feed.
- If they do not burp after a minute or so, you can stop. They do need to burp.

5. **Manage Crying**

- Do not blame it on gas. Treat the real causes of crying.
- The most common reason babies cry is because they are hungry. Feeding should calm the crying.
- If your baby has a soiled diaper, change it.
- Hold and gently rock your baby. Help them fall asleep.
- Do anything else comforting, such as swaddling in a blanket. Try a pacifier, massage, or warm bath.
- Some babies cry a lot (over 3 hours a day) and are very hard to comfort. If they have normal growth and a normal medical exam, the crying is called colic. See the Colic handout for more details.

6. **Treatments to Avoid**

- Do not put anything in the rectum to release gas. It will pass on its own.
- Infant gas drops. Research has shown they do not reduce crying.
- Probiotics. There is no research to show they reduce gas in babies.

Call Your Doctor If

- Crying for more than 2 hours that does not stop
- Frequent crying after 3 months of life
- You think your baby needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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