

# Managing colic in formula fed infants



Colic is common in the first few months of life and affects 20% of infants.<sup>1</sup>

This can be distressing for parents and is a frequent contributor to the need for healthcare professional consultations.

1 in 6 families seek help and advice about the management of colic.<sup>2</sup>



**This stepped care approach is designed to help healthcare professionals support parents and manage colic.**



# Identifying it as colic

A diagnosis of colic can be made when all the following are present<sup>3</sup>:



An infant aged <5 months when the symptoms start and stop



Recurrent and prolonged periods of crying, fussing or irritability reported by parents (caregivers) that occur without obvious cause and cannot be prevented or resolved by parents or caregivers



No evidence of infant faltering growth, fever or illness

## Offer parental reassurance and advice

In >90% of cases, treatment consists of helping the parents get through this challenging period in the babies development.<sup>3</sup> Reassure them that colic is a common issue that should resolve by 5-6 months of age.<sup>4</sup>



### Soothe baby:

- ✓ Hold the baby through the crying episode
- ✓ Gentle motion
- ✓ Create 'White noise'
- ✓ Giving the baby a warm bath

### Encourage parents to look after their well-being:

- ✓ Ask family and friends for support
- ✓ Rest when baby is asleep
- ✓ Access peer support from parents with babies of the same age
- ✓ Allow themselves time out for a few minutes by putting baby down in a safe place if they cannot cope



# Take a nutritional approach

If practical support has not helped and parents are still struggling, there are specialist formulas designed to help manage colic in formula fed infants. SMA® Comfort can be a useful option to consider.<sup>5</sup>

## How the nutritional features of SMA® Comfort may help with colic and associated symptoms of the crying baby

### REDUCED CRYING TIME IN INFANTS WITH COLIC

Reduced lactose content is associated with reduced crying times<sup>6</sup>

### SUPPORTS DIGESTION

Contains 100% whey, partially hydrolysed protein, which is easy to digest<sup>7</sup>

### REDUCTION IN CONSTIPATION

Magnesium-enriched formulas lead to softer stools in infant constipation<sup>8,9</sup>

### SUPPORTING INFANTS GUT HEALTH

Contains prebiotics (GOS & FOS) which promote growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut<sup>10</sup>

## Arrange for follow-up

- ✓ Arrange a follow up contact to reassure parents if symptoms persist.
- ✓ Parents should be made aware that when changing to a Comfort formula it may take up to 2 weeks to see an improvement in symptoms of colic and constipation.
- ✓ Some Comfort milks are thickened formulas so advise parents to use a fast flow teat.
- ✓ There may be a change in stool colour when changing to a Comfort milk, this is normal, and parents should be advised not to be concerned.

\*SMA® Comfort has an increased magnesium content of 8.3mg/100ml, compared to SMA® First Infant Milk which contains a magnesium level of 5.7mg/100ml. (The increased content is still within regulatory limits of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/128 for food for special medical purposes).



Please visit  
[smahcp.co.uk/colic-and-constipation](http://smahcp.co.uk/colic-and-constipation) or  
[smahcp.ie/colic-and-constipation](http://smahcp.ie/colic-and-constipation) for more  
 information about managing colic and to  
 download other tools

**REFERENCES:**

1. Vandenplas Y *et al.* JPN 2015 (61); 5: 531-537. 2. Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin. Management of Infantile Colic [Online]. 2013. Available at: <http://dtb.bmj.com/content/51/1/6.full.pdf+html> (Accessed January 2026). 3. Benninga M *et al.* Childhood Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders: Neonate/Toddler. *Gastroenterology*. 2016;150: 1443–1455. 4. Zeevenhooven, J., Koppen, I.J.N. and Benninga, M.A. The new Rome IV criteria for functional gastrointestinal disorders in infants and toddlers. *Pediatr. Gastroenterol. Hepatol. and Nutr.* 2017; 20 (1), 1-13. 5. Vandenplas Y *et al.* When should we use partially hydrolysed formulae for frequent gastrointestinal symptoms and allergy prevention? *Acta Paediatrica*; 2014: 103, 689-695. 6. Kanabar D *et al.* Improvement of symptoms in infant colic following reduction of lactose load with lactase. *J Hum Nutr Dietet* 2001; 14: 359-363. 7. Billeaud C *et al.* Gastric emptying in infants with or without gastro-oesophageal reflux according to the type of milk. *Eur J Clin Nutr* 1990;44:577-583. 8. Vandenplas Y, Gerlier L, Caekelbergh K, Nan-Study-Group, Possner M. An Observational Real-Life Study with a New Infant Formula in Infants with Functional Gastro-Intestinal Disorders. *Nutrients*. 2021 Sep 23;13(10):3336. 9. Benninga, M.A.; MENA Infant Constipation Study Group; Vandenplas, Y. Magnesium-rich formula for functional constipation in infants: A randomized comparator-controlled study. *Pediatr. Gastroenterol. Hepatol. Nutr.* 2019, 22, 270–281 10. Moro G, *et al.* Dosage-related bifidogenic effects of galacto- and fructooligosaccharides in formula-fed term infants. *J Pediatr Gastroenterol Nutr.* 2002 Mar;34(3):291-5.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** We believe that breastfeeding is the ideal nutritional start for babies as breast milk provides a balanced diet and protection against illness for a baby. We fully support the World Health Organization's recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life followed by the introduction of adequate nutritious complementary foods along with sustained breastfeeding up to two years of age. We also recognise that breastfeeding may not be an option due to certain medical conditions. Parents should only feed Infant formula for special medical purposes under supervision of a healthcare professional after full consideration of all feeding options, including breastfeeding. Continued use must be assessed by the healthcare professional in relation to the baby's progress bearing in mind any social and financial implications for the family. Infant formula should always be prepared, used and stored as instructed on the label in order to avoid risks to a baby's health. **This product must be used under medical supervision.** SMA® Comfort is a special formula intended for the dietary management of bottle-fed babies with colic and constipation. It is suitable as the sole source of nutrition up to 6 months of age, and in conjunction with solid food up to 12 months of age.

