



# Colic Solved?

by Dr. Jenn Berman



**B**efore giving birth, Sharon imagined holding her beautiful baby girl in her arms while rocking her to sleep. She imagined her daughter's sleeping face and happy smile. Sharon was not at all prepared for a colicky baby who cried for hours on end, leaving her feeling like a failure as a mother.

## What is Colic?

Colic is usually defined as uncontrollable and constant crying for at least three hours a day for three days a week in a baby that is otherwise healthy and well fed. Experts estimate that it occurs in 10-25% of babies. Colic usually starts several weeks after birth, peaks at about 6 weeks of age and usually shows

marked improvement by the baby's third to fifth month. Or so they say.

## Karp's 5 S's

Pediatrician Harvey Karp, who is most known for his book *The Happiest Baby on the Block*, believes that the reason so many babies cry those first three months is because they really needed to stay in the womb for another trimester. In his "fourth trimester" theory he explains that babies are over stimulated by the world outside the womb. He suggests that anything parents can do to recreate a womb-like environment will help calm babies and stop the crying.

Karp claims that his five "S's" calm even the fussiest of babies by triggering what he calls the "calming reflex." The first "S" is **swaddling**. Karp recommends tightly wrapping your baby in a blanket so he cannot flail his arms around. The second "S" is **side or stomach positioning**. Karp believes that babies are calmer when placed on their sides or stomachs. That said, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that, in order to avoid Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) parents should always put their children on their back to sleep. The third "S" is **"Shushing"**. Karp recommends placing your mouth four inches from your baby's ear and releasing a loud "shhhhh" sound. Some other sounds which have been found to be helpful because they mimic the shushing sound are the noises of appliances like a hair dryer, vacuum cleaner, white noise machine, or the static of a radio. The forth "S" is **swinging**. Karp recommends a briskly jiggling swing while, of course, protecting your baby's neck and head. The final "S" is **sucking** or helping your baby use a pacifier. Babies find sucking to be a soothing action that helps them to calm themselves.

## When Not Even the "5 S's" Do the Trick

In his brilliant book, *Colic Solved*, pediatric gastroenterologist Bryan Vartabedian claims that colic is often part of the treatable hidden epidemic of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD). Vartabedian claims that as many as 70 percent of babies between the ages of four and six months spit up at least

once a day, which is the most common sign of reflux. If your baby has one or more of the seven symptoms listed below you should have your child evaluated by a pediatrician or pediatric gastroenterologist.

The symptoms of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease are:

- Spitting and vomiting
- Constant hiccups
- Feeding disturbances
- Chronic irritability
- Discomfort when lying on the back
- Sleep disturbances
- Chronic cough and/or congestion

Reflux is often under diagnosed because it is not recognized, especially when a baby is thriving and otherwise healthy.

It is crucial to get the proper medical attention for a child who has these issues. Babies with Reflux tend to do much better when they are prescribed the proper medication and, in the case of bottle-fed infants, given the most appropriate formula.

## The Effects on Parents

Parents like Sharon and babies like Emma shouldn't have to suffer alone. It is important for parents to advocate for their children until they are satisfied with the treatment their children are receiving. Having a child who is crying all the time combined with not sleeping can hurt the parent-child bonding process. In addition, mothers with colicky babies who are already struggling with postpartum depression tend to fall deeper into depression if they do not receive proper care and support for their babies and themselves.

## Helpful Resources:

### Books:

- *Colic Solved: The Essential Guide to Infant Reflux and the Care of Your Crying, Difficult-to-Sooth Baby* by Dr. Bryan Vartabedian
- *The Happiest Baby on the Block: The New Way to Calm Crying and Help Your Baby Sleep Longer* by Dr. Harvey Karp

### Websites:

- [www.coliccalm.com](http://www.coliccalm.com)
- [www.colichelp.com](http://www.colichelp.com)
- [colicsolved.com](http://colicsolved.com)
- [www.cry-sis.org.uk](http://www.cry-sis.org.uk)
- [www.reflux.org](http://www.reflux.org)

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