

Gas and Abdominal Discomfort in Infants

It is very common for babies to be gassy and uncomfortable from 3-8 weeks of age. This is partially due to their high growth at this age and also changes occurring in their digestive tracts as they increase how much they can drink at one time.

Many babies will grunt and seem to struggle to pass stool and this is because they are trying to figure out which muscles they need to use in order to get the stool out. It can take a number of weeks for them to improve at this. The medical term for this is dyschezia.

At 4-6 weeks of age babies tend to slow down how often they stool, going less frequently but larger amounts which also contributes to them being gassy and uncomfortable.

Burping: or not burping is not related to gassiness - gas in babies is created by bacteria assisting with digestion and burping your baby more frequently will not change their gas.

Colic: The definition of colic is crying for three or more hours a day, three or more days a week, for three or more weeks. There is no treatment for colic and it generally resolves on its own over a few weeks. This is differently from a baby being gassy or uncomfortable.

Dairy: Many mothers will choose to cut dairy out of their diets to see if this helps with their baby's discomfort. This is generally not recommended unless the baby has blood in its stool and if that is the case or you are considering this option you should discuss it with your healthcare provider.

Formula: Many parents will choose to try a different brand of formula or a hypoallergenic type of formula to see if this helps. This may help some babies but most babies do well on regular formula and this option is likely only needed if the gassiness persists after 6-8 weeks of age.

Witching hour/ cluster feeding: Babies typically have higher needs for comfort and/or breast or bottle in the evening. This is normal given they are going through a time of rapid development. Temperament is a big factor that impacts a baby's fussiness - some have higher needs for support than others. Generally by 3 months of age most babies will grow out of this phase.

Green stool: In general green stool is normal and not a cause for concern especially if it's not every time. Green frothy stool every time can be associated with oversupply of milk and so ask your healthcare provider for assessment if this is happening to your baby. Formula and iron supplementation can also make stool green.

Treatment options:

There is no good evidence for any medications/treatments for gassiness but many parents will try various options such as:

- **Probiotics** may help with digestion such as Bio Gaia or Florastor and are likely safe but may disrupt the bacteria in the gut and we don't have a good understanding of the consequences
- **Ovol drops (simethicone)** are commonly used and seem to help some babies but there is no evidence for it. It is likely safe but there is not much data on it
- **Gripe water** is commonly used and is a combination of herbs. It often contains alcohol which is NOT SAFE for babies so if you choose to try it use an alcohol free version. It does not have good evidence for helping with gassiness and we do not have much data on the safety of it but it's generally NOT RECOMMENDED FOR INFANTS UNDER 1 MONTH OF AGE
- Other **colic drops** are unlikely to be helpful and have limited safety data
- **Gasspasser devices** such as the Windi by Fridababy are silicone devices inserted into a baby's anus, supposedly to relieve gas. These are NOT recommended as you can cause damage, infection, and it may stop your baby from learning the proper muscle relaxation to pass gas on their own
- **Soothing options** include skin to skin, white noise, baby wearing, warm bath, music, and/or movement. If your baby won't stop crying it is important for you, the caregivers/parents, to take a break and put the baby down for a few minutes and take a break. Baby's can sense our emotions so are more likely to become calm if we can be calm
- **Purple Crying:** <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/purple-crying>
 - Tips for helping when baby's won't stop crying
 - Remember it's okay to ask for help

Most babies will improve by 8-10 weeks of age without treatment and if they do not please see your healthcare provider for an assessment