

## Why Won't My Baby Sleep?

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As a newborn care specialist and sleep trainer, I get many questions about babies from feeding to diaper changing and swaddling. However, the most common question I get is often more complex than the inquiring parent realizes. The question goes something like this: "I have a baby who is a few weeks old and I cannot get him to sleep anywhere except on me. If I try to lay him down on his back like all the books say, he just screams and screams and lately it seems to be getting even worse. What do I do?"

When most parents call with this question, they assume that they are facing a sleep problem. What they don't realize is that quite often they are dealing with much more than just a sleep problem. With a few more questions I can target the real issue, which is usually not sleep at all. Instead, it is their baby's tummy, either in the form of acid reflux or food allergies and intolerances; sometimes both. It is not always obvious that their babies are in pain, but sleeping upright on mom, dad, or nanny's chest relieves a significant amount of the discomfort caused by acid reflux. It also provides the kind of comfort that only comes from human touch.

Often these parents report babies who have been diagnosed with "colic" by their pediatrician, if they had discussed the problem with their doctor at all. Many parents are afraid to bring their concerns to their pediatrician for fear of looking like inept parents or inadequate care givers. However, this problem does need to be brought up, especially if the pediatrician tries to dismiss parents' concerns, calls it "colic," or tells them nothing can be done and they will have to tough it out until it goes away. The medical community is discovering that "colic" has an explanation and it can be treated. If the pediatrician cannot help resolve it, a trip to the pediatric gastroenterologist could be worthwhile. They have the ability to diagnose and treat the pain this condition creates. Once it is treated, parents often find their babies can sleep well on their own.

There are a few things to help make the baby more comfortable in the meantime. If using formula, try switching to a hypo-allergenic brand. This is especially helpful if the baby vomits a lot, which could indicate a dairy allergy or intolerance and a simple switch in formula could make everyone happier. Elevating the baby's sleep surface 30 degrees is another tip to keep acid from coming up into the esophagus and causing the pain and discomfort. Also, try feeding the baby in an upright position and continue to keep their torso elevated for 30-45 minutes after each feeding. Avoid laying them flat except when you absolutely must. These few tricks can really help and make the baby instantly more comfortable.

So, if you are dealing with a baby who is having a hard time sleeping unless he is held, who screams during or after feedings, acts hungry but then after a few sucks pulls away, is congested a lot, seems to have unexplained coughs or hiccups, often arches his or her back and neck and seems to scream a lot, it is worth digging deeper into the cause as these little ones can be helped if diagnosed correctly.

*Tonya is a Newborn Care Specialist who does both consulting and in-home sleep training. She has more than 20 years experience and is a mom herself. In addition to being credentialed through the International Nanny Association where she serves as the Chair of INA's Nanny to Nanny Mentoring Program and is frequently asked to speak at INA's annual conferences. Tonya was awarded the Professional Childcare Provider of the Year in 2003 and nominated for INA's Nanny of the Year in 2004 and for the National Association of Nannies Harriette Grant Memorial Award. She can be reached via <http://www.babydreamteam.com>.*