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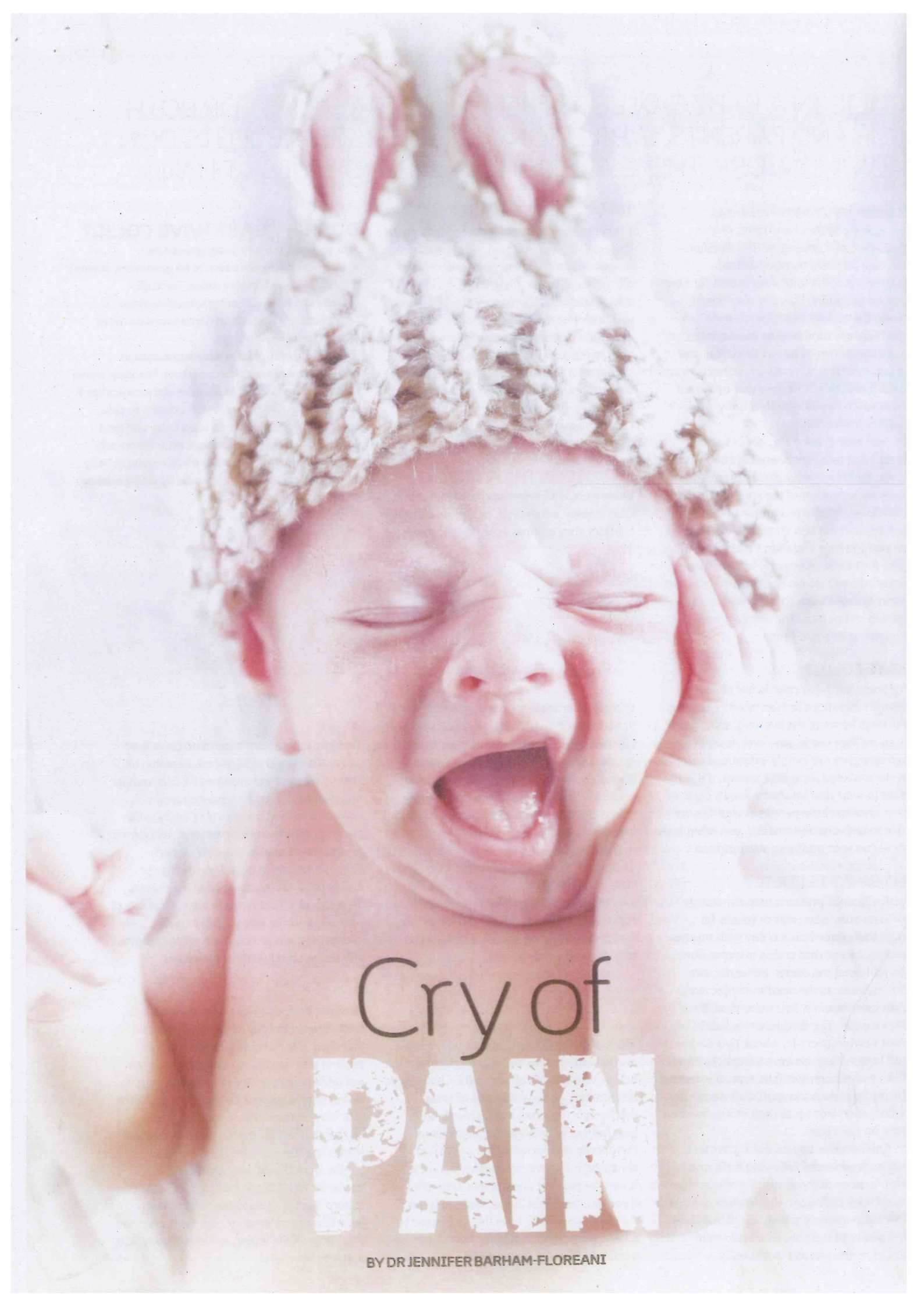
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Cry of  
**PAIN**

BY DR JENNIFER BARHAM-FLOREANI



## COLIC IN A BABY CAN BE EXTREMELY DISTRESSING FOR BOTH BUB AND PARENTS. WHILE CONVENTIONAL TREATMENTS DON'T ALWAYS WORK, THERE ARE NATURAL APPROACHES AT HAND.

Whether it's a failed relationship, a squabble with a neighbour or the exclusion of a colleague in a decision-making process, most of us can appreciate there is always a cost for poor communication. There is also a cost when the communication channels of the body are hindered or blocked. Lack of clear messages between the brain and organ systems has a direct impact on your health and this is never more apparent than when working with a baby who suffers from colic.

You may think, "Oh, colic is short lived." But this sentiment is little consolation for exhausted parents. Just recently, a mother of two pleaded with me to help her as she feared for her baby's safety; she was so exhausted by the screaming that she didn't trust herself to care for her newborn any longer. Indeed, there can be serious consequences when parents are unable to cope with colicky babies — not least the comfort and happiness of the infant.

### IS IT COLIC?

For some mothers, colic is not always so obvious. Newborn babies often cry during the early hours of the evening, sometimes because they are in pain and at other times because they are simply exhausted and overstimulated. As a new parent, it's very hard to read your newborn baby's cues. In fact, until the little people in your life are able to verbalise their needs, you often have to rely on your instincts and intuition.

### SO WHAT IS COLIC?

Typically, colic presents as a constantly irritable baby who cries or fusses for more than three hours a day with no clear pattern except that crying is worse during the early evening hours. Some doctors classify colic as the need to cry for more than three hours a day, more than three days a week. The distinction is subtle, as most newborns cry for about two-and-a-half hours a day. However, a colicky baby looks truly uncomfortable, typically arching the upper body backwards and vigorously pulling their legs up to their stomach when lying on their back.

Colic usually begins during the first two to three weeks following birth and continues up to three months of age, sometimes for longer. Unfortunately, colic affects up to one-third of newborn babies and it is hard to know who finds colic harder — the parents or the baby.

### WHAT CAUSES COLIC?

There is no single known cause of colic; rather, there are many speculated causes, including gas, constipation, lactose intolerance, food allergies and structural weakness within the infant's stomach/diaphragm area. Treatment within mainstream medicine often includes drug therapy or simply waiting for your baby to outgrow this condition. From a chiropractor's perspective, however, many of the resulting symptoms of colic may be due to nerve dysfunction, which results in poor communication between the brain and the digestive organs.

### ARE DRUGS THE ANSWER?

While there is some research to suggest that drug therapy, either orally or topically (through the skin), may at times ease the symptoms

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of colic, other studies have shown that dimethicone (Simethicone, Mylicon) is no more effective than a placebo in the treatment of infantile colic. As always, drugs aim to alleviate symptoms but not the underlying cause of the health challenge, and the side-effects can often pose a health risk or have a long-term impact on the body.

### IDEAS TO HELP EASE THE PAIN

Here are some drug-free suggestions that may offer your newborn effective relief from colic so that these first few months may be transformed into a more peaceful, joyous time for your whole family.

#### Have your baby assessed by a chiropractor who is confident working with infants.

The healthy functioning of your baby's spine and nervous system will play an integral role in the overall health of your child. Chiropractic adjustments for the correction of nerve dysfunction (vertebral subluxations) have long been acknowledged as an excellent therapeutic tool for infantile colic. In fact, chiropractic treatment has been shown to have a 94 per cent success rate with colic. If you intuitively feel that something is not right with your baby, have them assessed by a chiropractic doctor. Healthy babies, free of nerve irritation, are happy babies.

### DOES MY BABY HAVE COLIC?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does my newborn seem to be grimacing in pain?
- Is she uncomfortable when feeding?
- Does she have difficulty breastfeeding, particularly when feeding on one side more than the other?

One simple way chiropractors encourage mothers to assess if their newborn has poor nerve function (or a lack of clear nerve communication) is to compare how they feed from side to side, one breast to the other. Often a baby will feed well off one breast but will not attach properly on the other side. Alternatively, a newborn baby may come off the nipple frequently while feeding on one particular breast.

#### If you are breastfeeding, seek advice on correct techniques.

The right advice from a lactation consultant can make a world of difference. Learning to breastfeed can be challenging for both mother and baby and it can be harder again if a newborn has had some form of injury to the jaw or skull from the birth process. Sometimes newborns are unable to suckle properly because they are in pain. They may gulp and swallow unnecessary air in the process. Chiropractic adjustments in the early stages of neurological imprinting safely and effectively address dysfunction and help restore natural, efficient suckling patterns for infants.

#### Allow time to burp your baby.

Newborn babies will take a period of time to learn how to correctly feed, burp and digest their food. It is therefore important in the haste of your day to you allow your newborn any additional time they may need to burp. To assist burping, sit your baby on your lap, place your hand across their chest and lift them up slightly; this lightens the pressure on their stomach and encourages them to burp.

How often should you burp a colicky newborn? When bottle feeding, ideally try to burp them after every ounce of milk. If breastfeeding, attempt to burp them whenever they come off the breast, as this is often a sign that they have wind.







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**Cut out typically troublesome foods while breastfeeding.**

If you're breastfeeding and your newborn is suffering with colic, it's imperative — for a period of time at least — to steer away from foods known to cause irritation. Some of these irritants include drinks such as wine, champagne, fizzy drinks, coffee, tea and other caffeinated drinks. Foods include chocolate, acidic fruits such as oranges and berries, heavily spiced foods, lentils, split peas (such as in pea and ham soup), garlic, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and secondary proteins such as beans.

**Get off cow's milk.**

There is a lot of literature discussing today's high incidence of cow's milk allergies, ie casein allergies and/or lactose intolerance. In fact, statistics indicate many of us may unknowingly suffer with these low-grade sensitivities. This is a concern for both breastfed and formula-fed babies. Some breastfeeding mothers find that if they cut out cow's milk and dairy from their diets, their babies' colicky symptoms improve. You could trial this for one week and if your baby's symptoms improve you most likely have an

allergy to the protein or the sugar in milk. Seek further allergy and dietary advice and try to source alternative calcium-rich foods.

**Give your newborn high-quality probiotics.**

Probiotics are extremely important for both breastfed and formula-fed babies. Probiotics are living organisms that strengthen the integrity of the bowel and stimulate the immune system. The anti-inflammatory effects on the bowel are particularly beneficial for colicky babies. Breastfeeding mothers can drop the probiotics into the newborn's mouth just before they attach to the nipple. Probiotics can also be added to a bottle of formula just before feeding.

**Adjust your carrying position and use stomach massage.**

By carrying your baby across your forearm with their stomach facing down, you are able to elongate their abdominal area, offering your infant some relief while you massage their stomach. To carry your baby like this, hold out your forearm and place your baby face down on top of this arm with your baby's head close to your elbow and your

hand underneath their nappy/groin area. Your baby's legs will fall either side of your hand. In this position you should be able to hold the baby entirely with this arm.

Now, with your free hand, place your fingers on the middle of your newborn's upper tummy area — just under your baby's lowest rib. Very gently start to rub your fingers in a downwards motion towards your baby's belly button. The intention of this massage is to help relax the stomach. It may help to imagine that with your gentle finger movements you are trying to elongate a small tight ball of playdough into a flat pancake shape.

**SOME FASCINATING RESEARCH**

Two major studies on chiropractic and infantile colic have shown how spinal adjustments can have a positive effect on colic. One study carried out in 1989 was published in the *Journal of Manipulative Physiological Therapeutics*. In this study, 73 chiropractors adjusted the spines of 316 infants with moderate to severe cases of colic. These babies were averaging 5.2 hours of crying per day. The infants' mothers were given a diary to record the baby's symptoms, intensity and length of colicky crying and the level of comfort or discomfort of the infant.

Over a period of two weeks (usually three visits), 94 per cent of the infants treated with spinal adjustments showed a successful rating when compared with the other group of babies. One-quarter of these showed improvement after the first adjustment. Among the other group of babies, who were medicated using dimethicone drops, the improvement rate was 38 per cent.

Another study in 1999 published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* compared new results with this previous trial and found that the results of the two studies were virtually identical.

Clearly, colic is a complicated problem that continues to cause many parents and babies great distress. Fortunately, there are alternative treatments that may offer relief. Ideally, colic can be viewed holistically, in terms of the entire body and its overall functioning. Rather than feel that colic is something beyond their control, parents can make use of simple techniques to address the varied aspects of their babies' growth that could be impacting on their health. In doing so, they are promoting long-term wellness as well as short-term relief. *References available on request.*

**Dr Jennifer Barham-Floresani B.App.Clin. Sci, B.Chiropractic** is a mother of four, a chiropractor and a best-selling family health author. If you would like more extensive information on the above topics please refer to her new book, *Ticklish*. **W: [www.TicklishBook.com](http://www.TicklishBook.com)**