

Infant colic leads to no ongoing problems, study shows

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Credit: Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Colicky babies whose crying eases within three months have no ongoing behavioural problems according to new research by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI).

In welcome reassurance to concerned parents, MCRI-funded research conducted by Royal Children's Hospital paediatrician Dr. Georgie Bell found that crying and stress related to the common infant condition is short-lived and will likely resolve.

Infant [colic](#) is excessive crying in a healthy baby that resolves after three

months. Previous studies have included [babies](#) whose crying has persisted beyond that diagnostic threshold. This study, published in the latest *Journal of Paediatrics*, is the first in Australia to focus solely on colic.

For the study, MCRI and RCH researchers tracked 99 infants with colic and 182 without, looking for differences in behavioural outcomes once the children reached toddler age. They found no difference in behavioural or regulatory problems such as sleeping, feeding and temperament.

Lead author Dr. Georgie Bell said there was often concern around the impact of colic on child behaviour and [family](#) dysfunction in the longer term, with previous studies delivering mixed results.

"This study confirms to parents that if their baby is crying a lot in the first three months of life, there will not be long lasting impacts on their child's behaviour or the wellbeing of the family when compared with babies without [infant colic](#) at two to three years of age," Dr. Bell said.

"While it is no doubt a difficult time for parents, we can now reassure them that there is light at the end of the tunnel, and that their baby will grow up to be a toddler without higher risk of behaviour problems than other children who did not have colic."

One in five babies suffers colic, putting their mothers at increased risk of post-natal depression. Dr. Bell said she was among those to develop depression following the birth of her second child who suffered colic.

"If someone had been able to tell me that things were going to get better, it would have made my experience different," said Georgie, whose son is now six years old.

Colic in babies has previously been linked to such adverse outcomes as parental depression, child abuse, family dysfunction and early weaning.

Co-author and MCRI researcher Dr. Valerie Sung said the study also showed no difference in mental health between parents whose babies had colic and those whose children did not.

"What we can say now is that if the colic resolves within three months, your child's behaviour and the wellbeing of your family should be no different at two or three years of age than for families whose baby who did not have colic," Dr. Sung said.

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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