

SPITTING UP (REFLUX)

DEFINITION

Reflux or regurgitation is the spitting up of one or two mouthfuls of stomach contents. It is usually seen during or shortly after feedings. In contrast to vomiting, the milk comes up without any effort or discomfort. Reflux usually begins in the first weeks of life. More than half of all infants have it to some degree.

Cause

Poor closure of the valve (or ring of muscle) at the upper end of the stomach is responsible. This condition is also called *gastroesophageal reflux* (GER) or *chalasia*. Reflux is harmless as long as your infant does not spit up large amounts that interfere with normal weight gain.

Expected Course

Spitting up improves with age. By 7 months of age, most reflux has decreased or resolved. The reasons for this are probably the ability to sit up and the introduction of solid foods. By the time your baby has been walking for 3 months, even severe reflux should be totally cleared up.

HOME CARE

Feed Smaller Amounts. Overfeeding always makes spitting up worse. If the stomach is filled to capacity, spitting up is more likely. Give your baby smaller amounts (at least 1 ounce less than you have been giving). Your baby does not have to finish a bottle. Wait at least 2½ hours between feedings because it takes that long for the stomach to empty itself.

Avoid Pressure on the Abdomen. Avoid tight diapers. They put added pressure on the stomach. Do not double your child up during diaper changes. Do not let people hug your child or play vigorously right after meals.

Burp Your Child to Reduce Spitting Up. Burp your baby two or three times during each feeding. Do it when they pause and look around. Do not interrupt the feeding rhythm in order to burp them. Keep in mind that burping is less important than giving smaller feedings and avoiding tight diapers.

Keep in a Vertical Position After Meals. After meals, try to hold your baby in an upright position using a front pack, backpack, or swing for 30 minutes. When your infant is in an infant seat, keep them from getting scrunched up by putting a pad under their buttocks so that they are more stretched out. After your child is 6 months old, a jumpy seat or exersaucer can be helpful for maintaining an upright posture. To make the walker safe, buy one without wheels or remove the wheels. The best sleeping position for severe reflux is on the baby's side with the right side down.

Call our office immediately if:

- There is blood in the spit-up material.
- The spitting up causes your child to choke or cough.

Call our office during office hours if:

- Your baby does not seem to improve with this approach.
- Your baby is not gaining weight normally.
- You have other concerns or questions