

Reflux (GOR)

Reflux is when stomach contents are brought back up either into the oesophagus or mouth (regurgitation). Although it can be very distressing to parents, infants normally do reflux and regurgitate more than older children and it usually resolves by itself.

Sometimes the amount or consequences of the reflux can become a problem and need treatment. Sometimes, there may be another problem causing the reflux which may need to be identified and treated.

If you are worried, see your family doctor or Maternal and Child Health Nurse.

The medical term for reflux is Gastro-oesophageal reflux, or 'GOR'.

What is reflux?

Reflux is when stomach contents are brought back up into either the oesophagus or mouth. It happens spontaneously and, unlike vomiting, is effortless. Most reflux is swallowed back into the stomach but occasionally it is regurgitated. Parents are usually more aware of regurgitation, especially after feeds. It normally stops by the time the child is about one year old. Some babies regurgitate more than others - this does not necessarily mean there is anything wrong. It does not usually harm your child and is unlikely to cause problems later on in life.

Is there anything I should do?

For most children, you don't have to do anything about reflux and regurgitation. It is a natural process which will resolve by itself. It is possible to reduce the number of reflux episodes by placing your baby on their tummy (only if your baby is awake and only if you or another adult person is with them). This will not reduce the age at which the reflux will get better.

Changing formulas or changing from breastfeeding to bottles will not have any effect on the reflux at all and we don't recommend it.

Reflux and regurgitation can be very worrying for the family. Parents need to feel reassured there is not much they can do to resolve it and it will improve naturally with time. They also need to know when it is appropriate to be concerned and seek medical advice.

If you are unsure about what to do, talk to a health professional such as a maternal and child health nurse or your family doctor.

When should I see a doctor or Maternal and Child Health Nurse?

Sometimes there may be another problem causing the reflux, such as an infection. Sometimes the reflux itself can cause problems. See your family doctor or Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your child:

- has blood or bile (bile is a yellow fluid) in their vomit
- finds it difficult to swallow or is choking easily
- has a fever
- is irritable and hard to settle
- suddenly starts to regurgitate or vomit when they never had it before
- won't eat
- is losing weight or not gaining weight as you think they should.

What is the treatment?

The doctor or Maternal and Child Health Nurse will check your child's growth, check for infection or other possible causes for the reflux and may suggest some treatment such as thickened fluids. Pre-made thickened fluids are most suitable. Occasionally, medications can help.

Most children though do not need any treatment at all.

For more information

- Talk to your maternal and child health nurse or family doctor (GP)

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