

Reflux

In the last decade, the number of babies diagnosed with reflux has increased. Several studies show that over one million babies are being diagnosed with reflux each year. Dr Sears states that 30-50 percent of babies have reflux symptoms in their first year. For parents whose babies have been diagnosed, it can be a tiring and frustrating experience. It can affect baby's sleep, cause long bouts of inconsolable crying, frequent spit-ups and vomiting, to name a few. 80-90 percent of babies outgrow reflux within the first year, and most show improvement in the first 4-6 months of life. Below is more information about reflux and home remedies.

Common Causes:

Lower Esophageal Sphincter (LES) Relaxation: During an episode the sphincter relaxes too much and allows the food and acid to escape from the stomach to the esophagus.

Poor Motility: There is a general lack of coordination of the nerves and muscles in the esophagus to allow food to pass through to be digested properly.

Immature Neurological System: The brain is not developed enough to send the right signal at the right time.

Overeating: Extra pressure on the belly pushes the LES open.

Delayed Gastric Emptying: When the nerves in the stomach are not developed enough to help the food pass out of the stomach and the food stays in the stomach too long.

Food Intolerances and Allergies: Can cause the stomach to reject the food. The allergen can come through breast milk from something the mother ate, the wrong type of formula or from giving your baby solids that do not agree with her.

Constipation: Prevents food from leaving the stomach at a normal rate making the whole system back up.

Common Infant Reflux Symptoms:

- Frequent spitting up or vomiting
- Irritability when feeding
- Refusing food or eating only small amounts
- Sudden or constant crying
- Arching the back while feeding
- "Wet" burps
- Frequent hiccups
- Frequent coughing
- Poor sleep habits with frequent waking

Bad breath

A small number of infants will experience the following less common symptoms:

Difficulty swallowing

Frequent sore throat

Weight loss or poor weight gain

Respiratory problems (such as asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, wheezing)

Frequent ear or sinus infections

Excessive drooling

Hoarse voice

Spells of not breathing

Tips for discussing the issue with your doctor.

Make a list of symptoms and star the three most worrisome to you.

Make a three-day journal of food intake for both baby and mom (if breastfeeding), sleep patterns, fussy periods, and crying. Bring the journal with you to the Doctor's office.

Home Treatment:

Remember not everything works for every baby, play around with these tips to find what works for your baby. These tips come from the research of Angelique Millette and Jan Gambino's book [Reflux 101: A Parent's Guide to Gastroesophageal Reflux](#).

Positioning: Try to keep your baby upright as much as possible. When breastfeeding, try to feed baby in the upright position. The monkey hold works well for this. In general, sleep wedges are not advised, but discuss the options with your doctor. Elevating the head at night can help.

Routine and consistency: Try to stick with a sleep, feed, play schedule. And try to get the naps in as best as possible. When babies become overtired they resist sleep more.

Support Groups: Find a support group with parents going through the same issue. This helps with getting more tips and normalizing the experience.

Smoking: Avoid exposure to smoke. Research has shown that smoke aggravates reflux.

Swaddle: Swaddle when they are younger and remember to stop swaddling when they start to roll.

Movement: Gentle movement such as rocking may help soothe.

Distraction: Try taking the baby to a different room or to the park.

Clothing: Loose Clothing around the belly.

Bathing: Try a warm bath and aromatherapy to help babies relax.

Take a Walk: Fresh air and movement might help distract, help with sleep, and support parents getting out of the house for self-care.

Motion: Minimize bouncing and jiggling.

Burping: Burp after feeding.

Feedings: Feed little amounts at a time and increase frequency of feeds.

Feeds and Sleep: Try not to feed a lot close to bedtime when they are about to lay flat on their backs for a long stretch.

Diet: With breastfeeding mothers, sometimes mom can eat something that upsets the baby's stomach. Also, some formulas do not work with some babies' bellies. Moms can try the elimination diet where she eats a very bland diet for a couple of days, and then slowly adds foods back into the diet to see what, if anything, affects the baby. If the baby is on a milk based formula, then try soy, or vice versa.

Reflux can be very frustrating and cause numerous sleepless nights. Do the best you can and take breaks. Work with your doctor to help find the remedy(s) that will work for your little one. Finally, if you are needing addition support, give me a call.