

Gastroesophageal Reflex - Infant

Call 911 or an ambulance if your child:

- Struggles to take each breath
- Is unable to speak or cry
- Turns blue after vomiting
- Grunts with each breath
- Has blue or white lips or nails

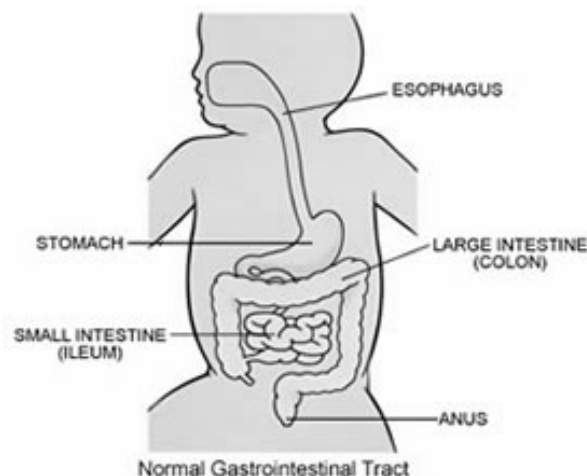
Call your child's regular doctor NOW (night or day) if your child:

- Is vomiting over and over, especially if the vomiting is forceful
- If the vomit becomes green in color
- Is not wanting to eat and is losing weight/not gaining weight
- Is an infant and has no wet diapers in 8 hours
- Is crying without tears
- Has a dry mouth or cracked lips
- Looks or acts very sick
- Seems more sleepy than usual
- Cries uncontrollably for more than an hour

Gastroesophageal reflux or GERD happens when food from the stomach comes back up into the esophagus after eating. The esophagus is the tube that connects the mouth to the stomach.

When an infant is eating, the formula or food moves from the mouth to the esophagus and then to the stomach.

- When food goes into the stomach, a ring of muscle fibers stops the food from moving back into the esophagus.
- Gastroesophageal reflux happens when this muscle does not work like it should and food travels back into the esophagus.
- A little bit of reflux is normal. Reflux needs to be treated if it causes pain, vomiting, weight loss, or difficulty breathing.



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Signs and Symptoms of GERD

- Coughing that is worse after eating
- Too much vomiting after feeds
- Refusing to eat
- Weight loss
- Very Irritable or fussy after eating
- Arching the back, especially after feeding

Here are some simple changes that can help babies who seem fussy after feeds, have difficulty feeding or are not gaining weight like they should:

- Burp your baby after each ounce of formula, or after feeding on each breast if breastfeeding.
- Your medical provider may suggest feeding with smaller amounts more often.
- If possible, keep your baby upright (by holding, car seat, or feeder seat) for 20 to 30 minutes after each feed.
- Your medical provider may suggest using a special type of bottle that allows air to escape while your baby eats.
- Talk to your medical provider **before** adding any rice cereal to formula.
- Your medical provider may start your child on medicine.
(Examples: Zantac®/Pepcid®).
- **Do not start any medicine without talking with your medical provider first.**

Treatment is needed:

If your child has repeated vomiting, weight loss, or reflux that causes difficulty with breathing.

Treatment is NOT needed:

If your child is growing well, gaining weight like they should, and seems comfortable.

For General Health Information:

Call or visit the Family Resource Center (a free health information library) located on the 3rd floor of St. Louis Children's Hospital. Call 314.454.2350. Email at frc@bjc.org