

## **Gastroesophageal Reflux and Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease in Infants** *Fancy Terms for “Spitting Up”*

Babies spit up! Most of the time it is considered normal, but sometimes it can be problematic.

What’s the difference between gastroesophageal reflux (GER) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)?

### **GER:**

- It is the movement of stomach contents into the esophagus and sometimes through the mouth and nose.
- It is not a disease and is considered normal. Infants with GER do not have pain associated with spitting and are often called “happy spitters.”
- It usually begins at 2 to 3 weeks of life and peaks between 4 to 5 months of age. Most full term babies will have complete resolution of spitting by 9 to 12 months of age.

### **GERD:**

- Unlike GER, GERD is associated with complications from acid reflux (stomach acid moving into the esophagus). Only a small percentage of babies who spit up have GERD.
- Some signs and symptoms of GERD include:
  - Refusing to eat
  - Frequently crying or arching the neck and back as if in pain
  - Choking while spitting up
  - Forceful or projectile vomiting
  - Spitting up blood
  - Frequent coughing
  - Not gaining weight
- **Most babies who spit up and are fussy or sleep poorly, do not have GERD as the cause.**

### **Treatment of GER and GERD - initiated by parent:**

- Burp at natural pauses in feeding.
- Keep your baby upright for up to 30 minutes after feeding
- Consider smaller, more frequent feedings
- Avoid tobacco smoke exposure

### **Treatment of GER and GERD - AS ADVISED BY YOUR PROVIDER:**

- Thickening of formula or expressed breast milk with oat cereal
- Up to 40% of babies with problematic GER have cow’s milk protein intolerance and sometimes soy intolerance. A trial of a hypoallergenic formula (Nutramigen, Alimentum) or if breast fed, elimination of all milk and soy products from mother’s diet can be tried for 2 to 3 weeks.
- Medications that reduce stomach acid - types of medications along with pros and cons will be addressed by your provider.

References: [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org), Up To Date

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