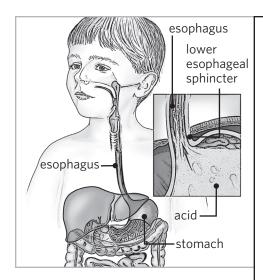
# **GERD** in Kids and Infants



GERD (also called acid reflux disease) is a condition that causes you to have heartburn and other symptoms. While it's more common in adults, kids and infants can have it too.

With GERD, acid from your child's stomach backs up into his esophagus, the pipe that connects his throat to his stomach. This happens when the muscle that connects his esophagus to his stomach (the lower esophageal sphincter) doesn't close all the way or relaxes when it shouldn't.

Your child's GERD may eventually go away. But in the meantime, there are things you can do at home to help ease symptoms. Your doctor may also recommend medicine for your child.

#### **Symptoms**

If your child has GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), he may have some or all of these symptoms:

- **heartburn**—a burning type of pain in his stomach or lower chest, behind his breastbone. It usually feels worse after meals and can last up to two hours.
- · dry cough
- asthma symptoms, such as trouble breathing
- trouble swallowing
- aching in his chest or stomach

Talk to your child's doctor as soon as you notice any of these symptoms. If GERD doesn't get better, your child might develop complications that would make it hard for him to get the nutrients he needs from foods.

See other side for GERD symptoms in infants and children under age 2.

### What You Can Do to Help GERD

Before trying medicine, your doctor may recommend making these changes at home to help your child:

- Avoid trigger foods—Some foods may make your child's GERD worse. Try avoiding citrus fruits and juices, chocolate, fatty or fried foods, garlic and onions, spicy foods, tomato-based foods, peppermint and caffeine.
- Raise the head of the bed—Use a brick or wooden block to raise the head of your child's bed 6 to 8 in. This can help stop acid from flowing upward while he sleeps.
- **Don't eat before bed or a nap**—Have your child wait two or three hours after eating before he lies down.
- **Eat smaller meals**—Feed your child six smaller meals during the day, instead of three large ones.
- Maintain a healthy weight—Talk to your doctor if your child is overweight. Extra fat can push up on your child's stomach and cause GERD. Losing weight can help.
- **Keep a journal**—Work with your child to write down when he has symptoms and what he was doing at the time. See if you can find a pattern of foods or activities that make his symptoms worse. Then, help him avoid them.

If you've tried several of these methods, and your child's GERD hasn't gotten better, your doctor may recommend medicine.



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### **GERD in Infants and Children Under Age 2**

Most babies outgrow GERD between ages 1 and 2. Common signs of GERD in infants or children under age 2 include:

- vomiting, especially after eating
- spitting up
- not eating and not gaining weight
- crankiness, continued crying or arching of the back during or right after feedings
- wet burps or hiccups



To learn more, visit

HealthyAdvice.com/
GERDKids

You can also visit these websites:

- **KidsHealth** www.kidshealth.org
- National Digestive
   Diseases Information
   Clearinghouse
   www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov

## **Helping GERD in Infants**

Since GERD in infants usually gets better by itself, your baby's doctor will most likely recommend at-home treatments like these first, before trying medicine:

- Thicken your baby's formula or breast milk with rice cereal (1 tablespoon of cereal to 2 oz. of milk or formula).
- **Burp your baby often**—After each 1 to 2 oz. of formula or after the first breast if you're breastfeeding.
- Hold your baby upright for 30 minutes after each feeding.
- Feed your baby more often, but give her less at each meal.

Most infants don't need medicine. But if your baby is uncomfortable, not growing, or having trouble sleeping or eating, your baby's doctor may recommend medicine.

#### Remember:

- See the doctor if your child or infant has symptoms.
- Make changes at home to help prevent GERD.
- If changes at home don't help, talk to your child's doctor about treatment options.

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