

In the first few months of life, **gastroesophageal reflux disease** is manifested by **regurgitation** (spit-up). This is very common because the ring (sphincter) that normally prevents stomach contents from going back up the esophagus isn't fully developed yet.

Unlike vomiting, milk regurgitation occurs without any effort on the part of the child. Milk is swallowed, goes down into the stomach and involuntarily comes back up to the mouth.

In most cases, the problem is benign and goes away on its own when the child starts walking. That's when the sphincter becomes more effective.

However, it's important to verify a few things:

- ✓ **The child is gaining weight properly.** Check their growth curve for confirmation. If the child isn't gaining enough weight, it could be a sign that regurgitation is limiting milk intake.
- ✓ **The child doesn't cry excessively during or after feedings.** If the child cries excessively, it could be a sign of pain due to milk passing through an irritated esophagus as a result of acid reflux from the stomach.
- ✓ **The child isn't choking, constantly coughing or having difficulty breathing.** If the child is choking, coughing constantly or having difficulty breathing, the milk may be getting into the airway (lungs).

If your child has none of the above symptoms, it's a minor issue that doesn't require medical attention. However, if your child has any of these symptoms, you should consult your healthcare provider.

There are many simple ways to deal with normal spit-up:

- ✓ Avoid having the child sit right after feeding, especially if they can't sit upright yet. This prevents the stomach from being squished, which can increase milk reflux. The best position for a baby to be in for the first hour after feeding is upright (e.g., front baby carrier). Even if they spit up, they should still sleep on their back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome.
- ✓ Thickening commercial infant formula with rice cereal (1 tsp [5 mL] per ounce [30 mL] of formula) won't prevent reflux, but may reduce the amount of formula being spat up (easier cleanup). Thickened commercial products are available on the market. Breast milk doesn't thicken with rice cereal.
- ✓ Whey-rich or more hydrolyzed commercial formulas may promote faster emptying of the stomach and, therefore, limit the amount of spit-up. Talk to your healthcare provider before switching to these products so you can make an informed decision. They'll help you make the right choice for your child's specific needs.

There's no evidence that smaller, more frequent feedings are beneficial. However, it does make sense to decrease the amount of formula you're giving your child if they're drinking too much and spitting up the excess. Likewise, it's important to burp your child more often to reduce bloating from swallowed air. Talk to your healthcare provider about how much your child needs to drink.

### Références

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