

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD) - INFANTS

The esophagus (eh-SOF–uh-gus) is the tube that goes from the mouth to the stomach (Picture 1). A muscle at the lower end of the esophagus should close after food is swallowed and has gone into the stomach. Gastroesophageal reflux occurs when this muscle is loose and does not close, or when it opens at the wrong time. When this happens, formula and stomach juices (acid) can come back up into the esophagus and may be vomited. This can irritate the esophagus, and may cause pain. It can lead to breathing problems or failure to gain weight. However, most children who have reflux are healthy and do not have these problems related to the reflux. Most infants do not require any special treatment and usually outgrow reflux by one year of age, but in some children it can last longer.

INFANT CARE

Feeding

- Hold your baby in an upright position during feeding time. **Do not prop the bottle.**
- Burp your baby after every 1 to 2 ounces of feeding. Place your baby in the upright position over your shoulder to burp. Do not place your baby in a sitting position when you burp him or her.
- Do not over-feed your baby. Give smaller feedings more often - every 3 to 4 hours.
- Your baby's doctor may have you feed thickened formula to help decrease the reflux. If so, the doctor or nurse will tell you how to do this.

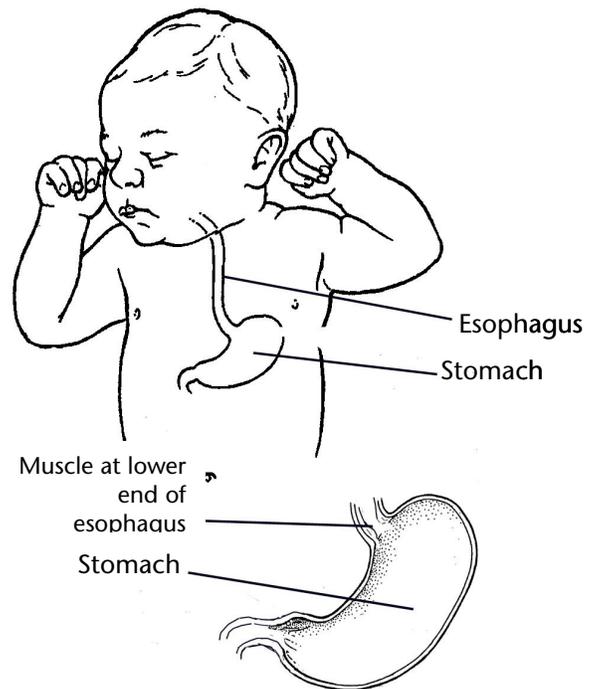
Medications

Your doctor may prescribe medicine to treat your baby's reflux. If so, your doctor or nurse will tell you about the medicine.

Positioning and Activity

- Keep your baby in an upright position for 1/2 hour after each feeding.
- Raise the head of the crib mattress with pillows and blankets at a 30° to 45° angle. To do this, place blankets or pillows **under the mattress**. This uses gravity to help food stay in your child's stomach. Children move around a lot when they sleep, so it will be hard to keep your child in the raised position. Placing blanket rolls at each side and below his feet may help to keep your child elevated for awhile. Never lay your baby flat on his back immediately after a feeding.

Continued on Page 2



Picture 1 Reflux can happen when the muscle at the lower end of the esophagus is loose and does not close properly.

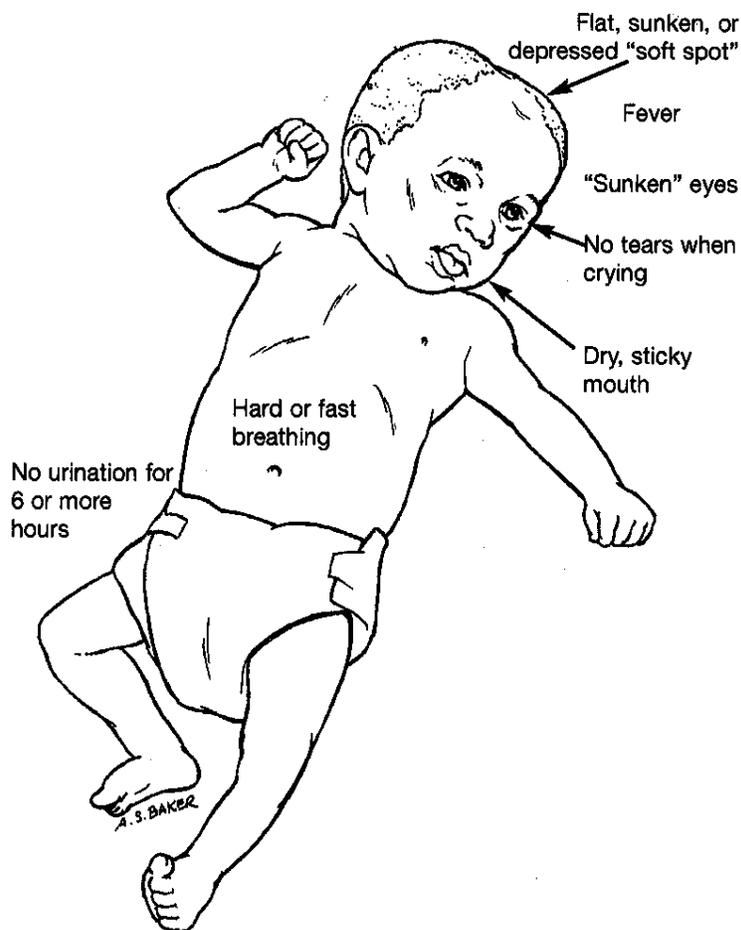
INFANT CARE (Continued)

- Make sure the side rails on the crib are up to the highest level.
- When holding your baby do not shake, jiggle him for the first hour after feedings.
- Plan activity or play time in the 2-hour period **before** a feeding whenever possible.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor if any of the following occurs:

- Your baby loses weight or fails to gain weight.
- There are streaks of blood in your baby's vomit.
- Your child has "hard breathing."
- Fever - temperature taken under the arm that is higher than 100°F.
- Baby seems to be in pain.
- Baby vomits the dose of medicine over and over again.
- Your baby looks dehydrated (dry mouth, sunken eyes, sunken soft spot, very little urine output).



Picture 2 Signs of dehydration.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call _____.