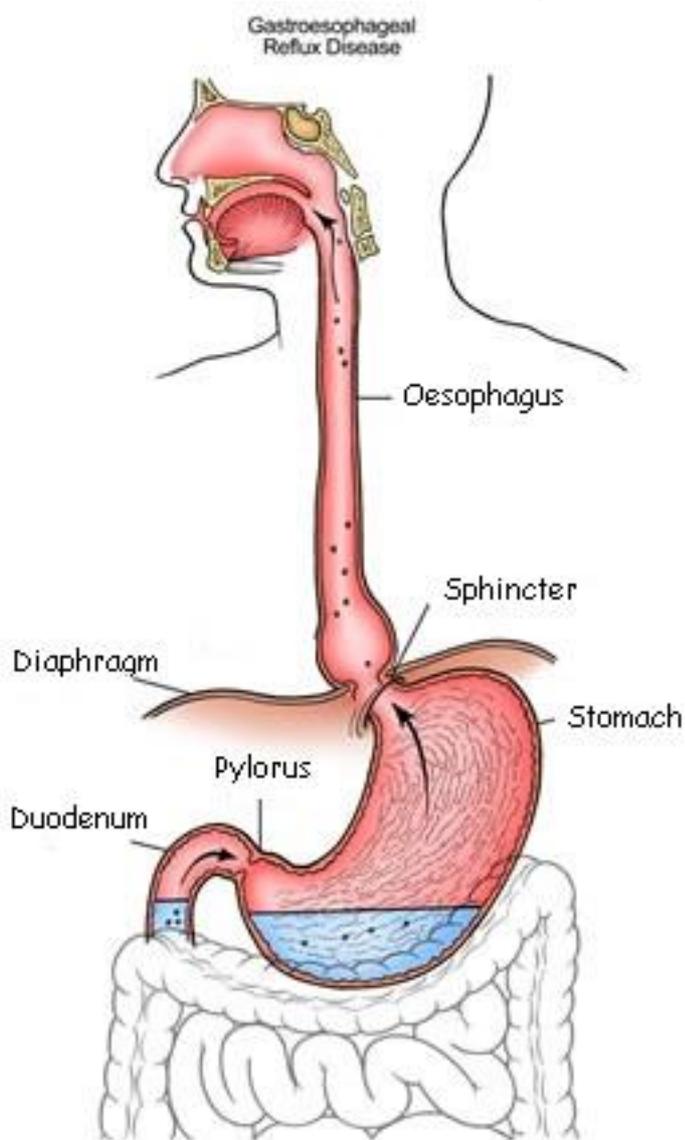


# Gastro-oesophageal reflux

## Parent information

Your child has been diagnosed with gastro-oesophageal reflux. This leaflet contains information about symptoms, diagnosis and treatments. Please ask about anything that you do not fully understand or wish to have explained in more detail.

### What Is gastro-oesophageal reflux?



Normally when we swallow food and drink, it moves down the food pipe (oesophagus) to the stomach, where it then moves through to the small and large intestines. When a baby or child has gastro-oesophageal reflux, the food and drink travels down the food pipe as normal, however, some of the mixture of food, drink and stomach acid can travel back up the food pipe. This can irritate the lining of the food pipe and cause pain. Some children with gastro-oesophageal reflux can also breathe some of this mixture into their windpipe, which can irritate the lungs and cause chest infections. Gastro-oesophageal reflux is sometimes referred to as "reflux" or "gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)" by doctors.

### What causes gastro-oesophageal reflux?

Gastro-oesophageal reflux is very common in newborns as the sphincter at the bottom of the oesophagus has not matured and strengthened. In the majority of cases, the reflux will improve as the baby grows and particularly when they start to eat more solid foods.



## Signs and symptoms of gastro-oesophageal reflux

The signs and symptoms can vary depending on the severity of the gastro-oesophageal reflux but can include:

- Frequent vomiting or spitting up after feeds
- Pain or unsettled after feeds (excessive crying; arching of child's back)
- Failure to thrive (baby not gaining weight as expected)
- Recurrent chest infections (due to breathing stomach contents into lungs)
- Inflammation of the oesophagus which may lead to some damage.

## How is gastro-oesophageal reflux diagnosed?

In most cases, your doctor will diagnose gastro-oesophageal reflux after taking a detailed history from you about your child's symptoms and examining your child. Occasionally further diagnostic tests are needed which may include a pH study or barium swallow.

## How is gastro-oesophageal reflux treated?

In many cases, a few small adjustments to your child's feeding pattern/position could be enough to improve their symptoms.

- Feed your child smaller amounts but more often.
- Feed your child in an upright position.
- Keep them in an upright position for a period of time following the feed.
- Tilt your child's cot so the head end is slightly raised (do not use pillows to raise your child's head as this can increase the risk of cot death).



If your baby is breast fed and you need advice and support please contact your midwife, health visitor or local children's centre.

If your baby is fed on formula milk, you could change to a milk designed to reduce reflux or adding a thickening agent to feeds. A thicker feed is less likely to flow back up the oesophagus.

If these simple suggestions do not lead to a satisfactory improvement in symptoms then your doctor may consider starting your child on medications. There are different medications available for the treatment of oesophageal reflux. They work in a variety of ways, including:

- Reducing the acid production in the stomach
- Speeding the rate at which stomach content moves from the stomach to the duodenum
- Forming a barrier on top of the stomach contents to reduce the risk of it flowing backwards.

Your doctor will decide which form of medication is appropriate for your child's individual needs.

If your child's gastro-oesophageal reflux is not adequately controlled by medications and is causing significant complications, then further diagnostic tests will be carried out to assess the severity of the reflux and your child may be referred to a specialist hospital for further treatment.



## Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format. Please contact: 01895 279973

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Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973 查詢。

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