



## HASSAN H. YOUSSEF, MD SC

### GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX (G.E.R.)

The esophagus is the tube leading 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 entered the stomach. Gastroesophageal reflux (G.E.R.) 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 cause irritation of the esophagus, and may lead to breathing problems or failure to gain weight. Most children who reflux are healthy and do not have other complications related to the reflux. Reflux is usually outgrown by 1 year of age.

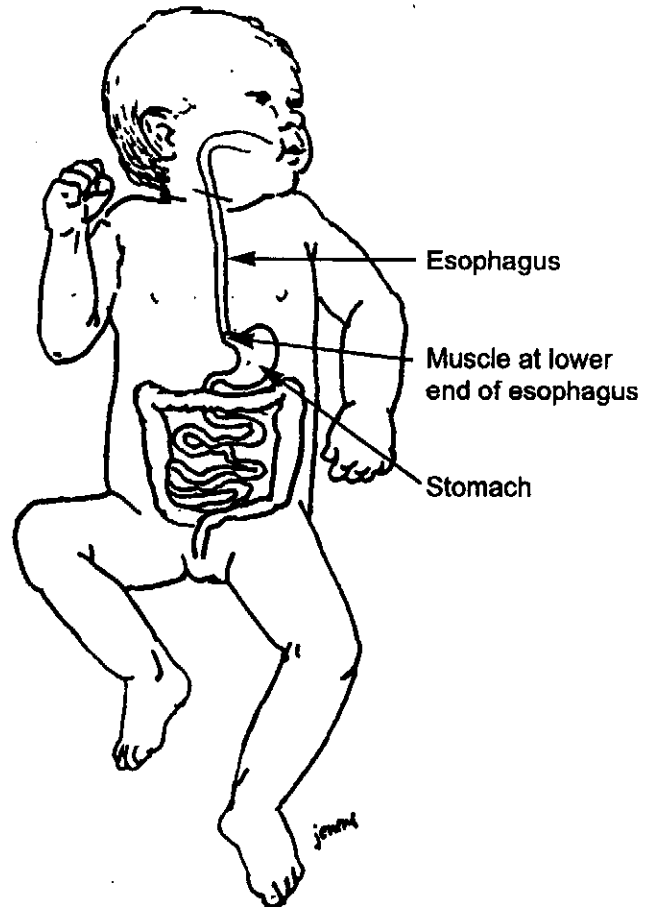
#### TREATMENT OF REFLUX

##### Feeding Techniques

- You will need to feed your baby thickened formula to help decrease the reflux. To thicken the formula, add 1 tablespoon of baby cereal (rice, oatmeal, or barley) to each ounce of formula. (Note: For some brands of cereal you may need to use slightly more or less cereal.) The formula should have the consistency of mustard. Because the formula will be thicker, you will need to make a bigger hole in the nipple of the bottle with a clean needle or scissors. This will let the thickened formula come through the nipple.
- 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. Be careful not to press on your baby's stomach or bend him at the waist while you are burping him.
- Do not overfeed your baby. If necessary, give smaller, more frequent feedings every 3 to 4 hours.

##### Medications

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



Picture 1 The gastrointestinal system inside the body.

## TREATMENT OF REFLUX (Continued)

### Positioning and Activity

- Keep your baby in an upright position for 1 to 2 hours after each feeding and while sleeping at night.
- Elevate (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 (Picture 2). 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 a while.
- When holding your baby do not shake, jiggle, or rock him for the first 2 hours after feedings.
- Plan activity or play time in the 2 hour period before a feeding whenever possible.



**Picture 2** Use blankets or pillows under the mattress to raise the head of the bed 30°.

### WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

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

- If your baby loses weight or fails to gain weight.
- If there are streaks of blood in your baby's vomit.
- If your child has "hard breathing" or fever.
- If your baby seems to be in pain.
- If your baby repeatedly vomits the dose of medicine.
- If your baby appears to be dehydrated (dry mouth, sunken eyes, sunken soft spot, very little urine output).

### SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

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