

Definition & Facts for GER & Gerd in Infants

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What is GER?

Gastroesophageal reflux (GER) happens when stomach contents come back up into the esophagus. GER often causes regurgitation—stomach contents coming up through the esophagus and into the throat or mouth—and spitting up. Regurgitation and [spitting up](#) NIH are normal in infants—babies younger than 1 year old.



In infants, GER often causes regurgitation and spitting up.

Does GER have another name?

Doctors also refer to GER in infants as

- acid indigestion
- acid reflux
- acid regurgitation
- heartburn
- reflux
- spitting up

How common is GER in infants?

GER and regurgitation are common in infants. Regurgitation may occur one or more times each day and is more common in infants younger than 6 months old.¹ About 70 to 85 percent of infants have daily regurgitation by the age of 2 months.² Most children no longer have GER symptoms by the time they are 12 to 14 months old.¹

What is GERD?

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a more severe and long-lasting condition in which GER causes repeated **symptoms** that are bothersome or leads to **complications**. However, doctors and caregivers may find it difficult to determine whether an infant's symptoms are bothersome and whether the symptoms are caused by GER or by something else.

If you think your infant has GERD, you should take him or her to see a doctor or a pediatrician.

How common is GERD in infants?

Experts aren't sure how common GERD is in infants because the condition is difficult to diagnose.

Which infants are more likely to have GERD?

Any infant can have GERD. GERD is more common in [premature infants](#) NIH. Infants with certain health conditions that affect the esophagus, nervous system, or lungs are also more likely to have GERD.

What are the complications of GERD in infants?

Infants with GERD may develop complications such as esophagitis, poor weight gain, and complications outside the esophagus. However, some of these complications may be signs of other, unrelated conditions that affect infants. Doctors may check for health problems other than GERD that could be causing these complications.

Esophagitis

Esophagitis is **inflammation** in the esophagus. Esophagitis may cause **ulcers** in the lining of the esophagus and bleeding. Over time, **chronic** esophagitis may increase the chance of developing esophageal **stricture** and **Barrett's esophagus**.

Poor weight gain

Infants with GERD may spit up their food often or refuse to eat. These symptoms can cause an infant to gain less weight than expected or to lose weight.

Complications outside the esophagus

Some infants with GERD also have complications outside the esophagus, in the mouth, throat, or lungs. These complications may include

- [cough](#) NIH
- laryngitis—inflammation of the voice box that can lead to a short-term loss of voice
- [pneumonia](#) NIH that keeps coming back
- wheezing, a high-pitched whistling sound that happens while breathing

References

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 healthinfo@niddk.nih.gov

 1-800-860-8747

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