

# UNDERSTANDING Gastroesophageal Reflux



## What is gastroesophageal reflux (GER)?

**Gastroesophageal reflux**, also called GE reflux or GER, happens when the contents of the stomach back up into the **esophagus**.

## What causes GER?

In most babies with GER, the ring of muscles (**sphincter**) that separates the stomach and the esophagus is not fully developed. When the ring does not close tightly, the stomach contents can back up into the esophagus. As the baby matures, the muscles grow stronger and the GER often stops.

GER can also happen when the baby swallows too much air. This can occur when the baby is fed too quickly.

## What are the symptoms of GER?

Symptoms of GER include:

- Spitting up
- Refusing to eat
- Fussing during or after feedings
- Coughing or wheezing
- Choking
- Crying when lying face up, especially after feeding

## How common is GER?

GER is very common, especially in premature babies.

## Does GER cause permanent problems?

In most cases, GER does not cause permanent harm to the baby. It usually goes away as the baby grows.



