

Reflux and CF

Gastro oesophageal reflux is a very common condition in many adults and children, and even more common in those with cystic fibrosis (CF).

It varies in its severity and many children grow out of it but for some older children and adults it can be an ongoing problem. It happens when the stomach acid rises up into the oesophagus and causes a feeling of discomfort, known as heart burn, acid reflux or gastroesophageal reflux disease. This can lead to aspiration of the contents of the stomach into the airways, causing inflammation and possible lung damage.

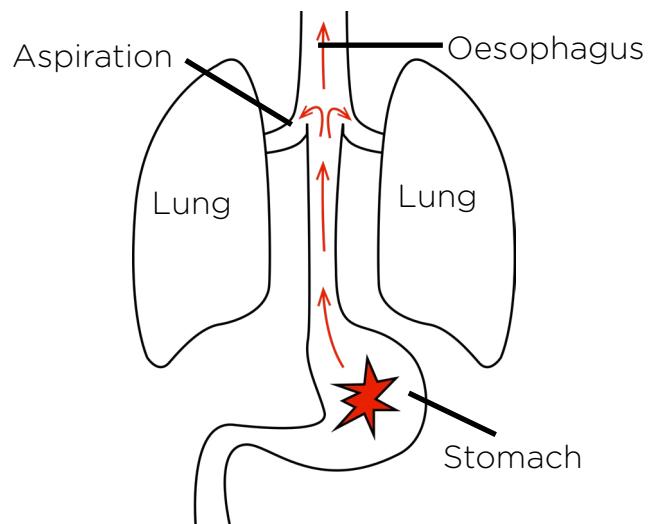
Causes

Reflux can occur in babies, children and adults. It may be triggered by particular foods or drinks, lying in certain positions or even coughing and airway clearance. Reflux is often diagnosed in older children and adults by taking a history of symptoms, but babies and young children may need to have some investigations done to help determine the issue.

Symptoms

Symptoms of reflux may include:

- Unsettled, crying and fussing baby.
- Excessive spitting up and vomiting or regurgitation.
- Refusal to feed or only eating small amounts.
- Irritability during feeding/eating.
- Regurgitation, wet burps or hiccups.



- Failure to gain weight.
- Complaining of pain or arching during or after feeding.
- Pain when swallowing and difficulty swallowing.
- Frequent cough or wheeze.
- Cough at night.
- Gagging or choking.
- Disturbed sleeping.

Treatment

Reflux treatment depends on the severity of the disease. Changing your sleeping position, raising the head of the bed and wearing clothes that aren't too tight on your tummy might help with mild symptoms. Babies may get some relief by thickening feeds, starting solid food, feeding in more upright positions and 'burping' for longer.

In older children and adults, it may be helpful to avoid foods that trigger symptoms or eat smaller amounts more often.

Discovering which foods make your symptoms worse can help you deal with your reflux. Triggers are different for different people. In order to figure out your triggers, it helps to keep a food diary. Avoiding alcohol, carbonated drinks and spicy foods before airway clearance may be useful in preventing episodes. Remember to get advice from your CF team before you make any changes to your diet.

If these measures aren't effective, medication might be prescribed. In severe cases, surgery might be indicated to tighten the valve between the stomach and the oesophagus. If you have any questions, please consult your CF team as individual treatment will be prescribed.

Useful Resources

- [CFWA Factsheets](#)
- [CFFood \(CFWA\)](#)
- [GERD Treatments \(CF Foundation\)](#)
- [GORD \(Health Direct\)](#)

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