

Reflux and CF

Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) is a very common condition in many babies, children and adults, and even more common in those with CF. Many children grow out of it, but for some, it can be an ongoing problem.

GORD occurs when the stomach acid rises up into the oesophagus and causes a feeling of discomfort, known as heart burn or acid reflux. In severe cases, this can lead to aspiration of the contents of the stomach into the airways, causing inflammation and possible lung damage.

Causes

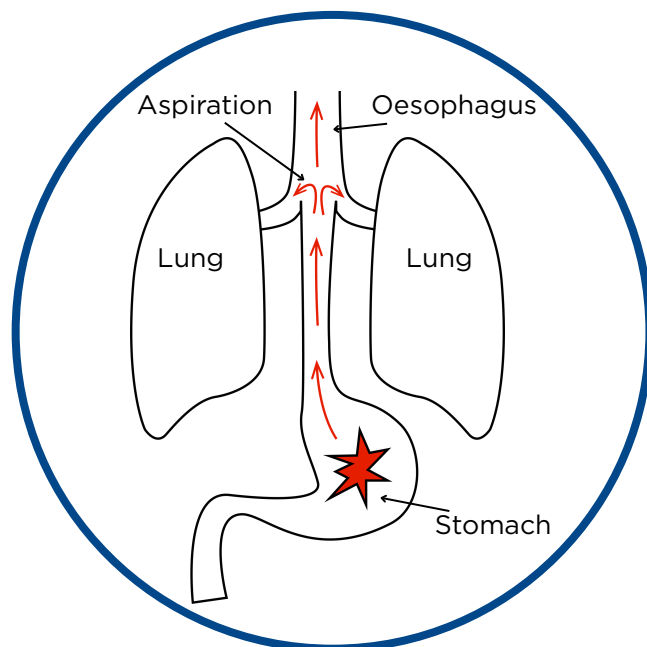
Reflux may be triggered by particular foods or drinks, lying in certain positions or even coughing and airway clearance. It usually happens because the lower oesophageal sphincter doesn't close properly, allowing stomach contents to rise up into the throat.

It 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

In babies, symptoms 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
- Arching during or after feeding
- Pain when swallowing and difficulty swallowing
- Gagging or choking
- Disturbed sleeping



In children and adults, symptoms may include:

- Chest pain
- Burning sensation in the chest
- Regurgitation of stomach contents
- A night time cough or worsening asthma symptoms can indicate GORD.

Treatment

Reflux treatment depends on the severity of the disease and can be managed in a variety of ways.

In babies, mild reflux can be managed by:

- Ensuring clothing is not too tight around their tummies
- Feeding your baby in a more upright position
- 'Burping' longer after feeding
- Making sure you allow at least an hour after feeding before physio

Medications are available for severe cases and may be something to discuss with your baby's CF team.

In children & adults, mild reflux can be managed by:

- Not eating big meals just before lying down
- Avoiding certain spicy foods, alcohol, caffeinated and carbonated beverages, and mints
- Lifting the head of your bed

Discovering which foods and activities make your symptoms worse can help you deal with your reflux. In order to figure out your triggers, it helps to keep a food and activity diary. Remember to get advice from your CF team before you make any changes.

If these measures aren't effective, there are a range of medications which can be prescribed. In severe cases, surgery might be needed 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

- [Nutrition for Adults](#) (CFWA)
- [GORD](#) (Health Direct)
- [CFWA factsheets](#)