

Reflux



Many babies suffering from reflux can benefit from a simple and gentle chiropractic adjustment, developing.

Mum sits in the chiropractor's waiting room with a towel over each shoulder and both of them usually smell badly. If you wait long enough, usually not very long, baby will vomit onto one of those towels – again! This is the typical picture of the child with gastro-oesophageal reflux, or just plain reflux as most parents refer to it as.

What is reflux?

Reflux is a condition which involves repetitive vomiting by a baby whose sphincter muscle at the stomach end of the oesophagus has not fully matured. This makes the movement of food somewhat uncoordinated. The sphincter is a clever little muscle that opens to let food through to the stomach, and then closes to keep it from regurgitating. In some babies, this sphincter sometimes inappropriately opens and lets food and stomach acid back up into the oesophagus. This usually results in forceful vomiting, hence the mum with towels over both shoulders. Reflux is very common in the first 3 months of life as the sphincter develops, but after that this condition could have a different cause.

What are the symptoms of reflux?

Although some babies with reflux are very distressed and miserable, by far the majority seems untroubled by their condition – they just vomit endlessly and seemingly without effort. Of those babies who continue to vomit beyond the third month of life, at least half will be symptom free by their first birthday or before. In others, there is the possibility of complications. The more common complications are oesophagitis, a condition in which the oesophagus becomes inflamed due to the action of the stomach acid, and aspiration, a condition where the child inhales small amounts of vomit and ends up with respiratory troubles and Failure-to-Thrive.

What causes my baby to vomit?

As stated above, immaturity of the sphincter between the oesophagus and stomach leads to vomiting in babies. This is facilitated by the fact that the length of the oesophagus is very short in the baby and offers little resistance to vomiting. A smaller than usual stomach size accompanied by rapid feeding will also lead to vomiting. One of the most important reasons why babies regurgitate however relates to poor peristaltic function. Peristalsis is the wave like motion in the intestine which moves food forward. This function is under control of the nervous system.

How can a chiropractor help?

When there is a chiropractic type problem in the baby's nervous system, often related to the birth process, it may affect peristalsis and cause excessive vomiting. A simple, very gentle chiropractic adjustment can relieve this neurological problem and get the baby's peristalsis working at the right level. Many babies with excessive vomiting benefit from chiropractic care. Do you have a baby that suffers from reflux – why not see your chiropractor today and see if there is a problem

Where else can I find help?

Your chiropractor will be able to advise you of groups and organizations in your local area, or if you need to see your family doctor or paediatrician in extreme or persistent cases. In Australia there are also some organizations that specialize in helping mothers with babies who are experiencing symptoms such as colic and reflux.

Two of these organizations you may want to get in touch with are;

Karitane 24 Hour Hotline
Phone 02 9794 1852
Freecall 1800 677 961

Tresillian Parenting Advice
24 Hour parents help line
Phone 02 9569 5400
Freecall 1800 637 357