## UNDERSTANDING Gastroesophageal <u>Reflux</u>

### 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:

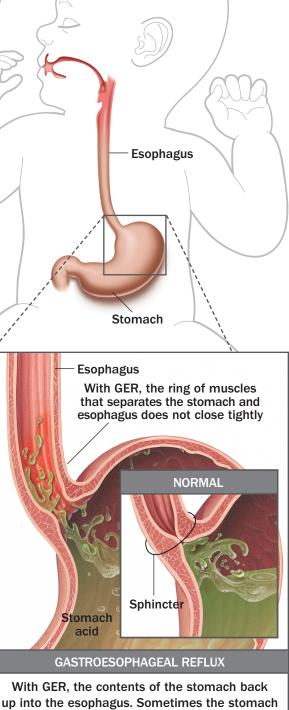
- Spitting up
- Refusing to eat
- Fussing during or after feedings
- Coughing or wheezing
- Choking
- Crying when lying face up, especially after feeding

### 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.



contents come out of the baby's mouth (the baby spits up).

GER ~

# **Treating Gastroesophageal Reflux**

### What treatment will my baby receive?

Many cases of GER may be helped by changing how the baby is fed. The health care team may recommend:

- Smaller, more frequent feedings
- Holding the baby upright (in a sitting position) during feeding and for 15 to 30 minutes after feeding
- Burping the baby during and after feedings
- Not bouncing or jiggling the baby after feeding
- If breast-feeding, changes to the mother's diet can make a difference
- If formula-feeding, trying another type may help (for example: cow, soy, or elemental)

In a few cases, GER may be a symptom of a more serious problem. If needed, tests will be ordered to find the cause of the problem. The health care team will talk with you about the tests and possible treatment.

### What will happen next?

In most cases, GER goes away on its own; however, each baby is different. Talk to your baby's health care team. It is important to keep your baby's appointments after you leave the hospital.

## Glossary

**Esophageal** – related to the esophagus

**Esophagus** – tube connecting the mouth and the stomach

**Gastro** – related to the stomach

**Gastroesophageal Reflux (GER)** – contents of the stomach back up into the esophagus

**Sphincter** – ring of muscles that separates parts of the digestive track, for example, between the esophagus and the stomach

Ask the health care team when you have questions—they are there to help.

Please visit <u>www.nicu-pet.com</u> to download additional copies.

#### NOTES:

Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_ @ 2016 Mallinckroat\_US PRC/INOrr/09160071\_September 2016