



with Spit Up?



By Brenda Stokes

Continued from [page 1](#)

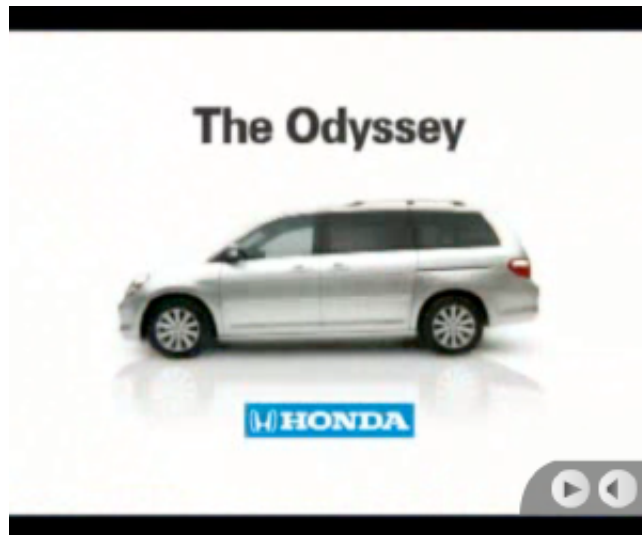
What's up, indeed! It's a rare parent who doesn't have to contend with spit up during his or her child's infancy. It's true most babies have trouble keeping their feedings down from time to time, but do you know why? If not, read on. BabyZone has prepared this helpful guide to spit up—from why it happens to burping tips to how to get rid of baby reflux for good!

Why Do Babies Spit Up?

Babies spit up for a variety of reasons, but typically not because they are sick. "Most spitting up is overflow from the stomach up the esophagus (called reflux)," says Dr. Charles Shubin, Medical Director of the Children's Health Center at Mercy Family Care in Baltimore.

Quite simply, many babies spit up because they are overfilled. Babies' primarily liquid diet has a lot to do with it as well, making the typical age range affected by the spit up problem between newborns to six months. Additionally, babies can take in air with their formula or breast milk—and when a baby burps up the air, the milk sometimes comes with it.

Don't be concerned if your baby is spitting up, however, as Dr. Shubin insists this occurrence is completely normal. He reminds parents that all people have reflux, even adults, though we refer to it as heartburn. As adults, we know that it often takes a small burp to relieve any reflux we may experience. The same goes for babies.



Burping Basics

Getting your baby to burp isn't all that difficult, yet there are few ground rules you should follow. According to Dr. Mary Ann LoFrumento, creator of the *Simply Parenting* book and DVD series, "The proper way to burp a baby is to place the baby in an upright position—usually against the chest—and pat the baby's back gently." You don't have to vigorously pat your baby's back to elicit a burp; in fact, doing so may actually cause your baby to spit up. You only need to pat your baby's back for a couple of minutes, and if nothing happens, your little one probably didn't swallow a lot of air and doesn't need to burp anyway.

"Burp the baby frequently, after each ounce or two," suggests Dr. Shubin, adding that you should always place your child so he is leaning to the right during burping. This positioning allows the air bubbles to come up more easily.

Now that you know how to burp your baby the right way, here are a few things you should avoid at all costs when trying to ease reflux.

- **Never put pressure on your baby's tummy:** If you place your child high on your chest, her tummy gets squished into your shoulder. This is a surefire way to cause the whole feeding to come up with the burp!
- **Don't overfeed:** Feeding your baby too much and too often can cause her to, quite literally, overflow. "Newborns sometimes take only two ounces or less," says Dr. LoFrumento, but as your baby continues to grow, she will require more food. Instead of following a rigid schedule for feeding, Dr. LoFrumento recommends you trust your instincts about what is the right amount of food your baby needs.
- **Never hold your baby above your head:** At least don't do this right after he or she has just eaten. "Gravity rules," reminds Dr. LoFrumento, and whatever is in your baby's tummy will want to come right out. It's best to keep your little one in an upright position and try not to jostle your baby around after feeding, since this can also cause spitting up.

Other Reflux Remedies

Burping is commonly thought of as the one and only cure for spitting up, yet there are a few tips and tricks parents can adhere to that reduce a little one's air intake and need to burp.

"Some ways to prevent spitting up are to feed the baby in a mostly upright position, leaning the baby to his or her left," says Dr. Shubin. This method works well in adults with acid reflux problems, as well.

If your baby doesn't seem to be keeping much of his feedings down, there are products available that thicken the feedings. Thicker material in the stomach tends to stay in the stomach, says Dr. Shubin. One formula thickener on the market is called Enfamil-AR, and it works by having a liquid consistency until it touches stomach acid and then thickens.

If none of these methods work, your doctor may prescribe anti-reflux medication that helps keep your baby's feedings in her tummy where they belong.

Spitting Up and Health Concerns

Although spitting up is a common occurrence in babies, it has the potential of becoming a health concern—such as when babies have gastroesophageal reflux disease, also known as GERD. This condition causes babies to spit up nearly all of their feedings. Because of this, infants who suffer from GERD have irritation of the esophagus and lack the nutrition they need to grow and be healthy. Doctors typically prescribe anti-acid medications and thickened feeding formulas for such cases to combat the excessive spitting up. Fortunately this condition is not common and easy to treat.

The vast majority of babies who spit up do not have serious health problems and are just going through a normal stage of childhood. As long as the baby is keeping in more than he or she is spitting up, all should be well. If you're concerned, pay a visit to your child's doctor to discuss the reflux. Just remember to bring an extra change of clothing whenever you go out—for parents and baby!

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