

Discharge Instructions: When Your Baby Spits Up or Vomits

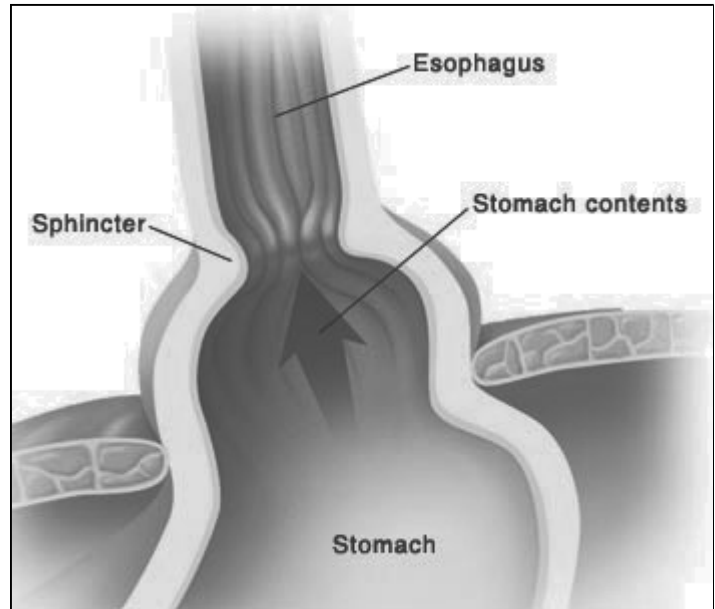
At the top of the stomach, there's a muscle called the **sphincter**. When you eat, the sphincter opens to let food into the stomach. When you're not eating, the sphincter stays closed to keep food inside the stomach. The sphincter is very relaxed in babies. So it's easy for a little bit of the baby's stomach contents to leave the stomach, travel up the esophagus (food pipe), and come out through the mouth. This is called "spitting up," and it's normal. But spitting up is not the same as vomiting, which can be a sign of a serious problem. This sheet will help you understand the difference.

What Is Spitting Up?

Spitting up is sometimes called a "wet burp." It usually happens during or right after feeding. Only a small amount of liquid comes up. If your baby spits up, gently wipe the baby's face and lips clean. There is no need to call the doctor.

What Is Vomiting?

Vomiting is more serious than spitting up. It's more forceful, and a larger amount of liquid or food comes up from the stomach. It's also persistent (happens more than once). Vomiting can happen during or after a feeding. It can also happen when the baby isn't eating. Vomiting can be a sign that the baby is sick (see the box below).



In babies, it's common for a little bit of fluid to travel out of the stomach and up the esophagus.

Signs of a Problem

Call the doctor right away if your baby has:

- Vomit that is green-tinged or red-tinged, even if the baby vomits only once.
- Persistent vomiting, no matter what the vomit looks like.
- Extremely forceful vomiting, even if it happens only once.