

Children with Special Needs Often Suffer from GERD

GERD (pediatric gastroesophageal reflux disease) is easy to miss in children with special needs and they are *much* more likely to have it than the general population.

Signs and symptoms of pediatric GERD may include:

- **Pain** - irritability, constant or sudden crying, "colic", back arching, abdominal pain above the belly button, chest pain, heartburn or burning sensation in the esophagus. (Rare - pain migrating to the shoulder/shoulder blade)
- **Vomiting** - frequent spitting-up or vomiting, frequent wet/sour burps, wet hiccups, food coming part way up more than an hour after eating, spitting-up after six months of age. With 'invisible' or 'silent reflux' the food goes back down, not out of the mouth. (Rare - nausea, projectile vomiting)
- **Eating** - extreme pickiness about foods or textures, food intolerances, refusing food, eating only a few bites despite hunger, eating only when sleepy, gagging, choking, poor weight gain, weight loss. (Rare - excessive weight gain from 'comfort feeding.')
- **Respiratory** - bad breath, constantly runny nose, frequent sore throat, upper respiratory infections, sinus infections, bronchitis, croup, wheezing, asthma, nighttime cough, nagging dry cough, throat clearing, noisy or labored breathing/stridor, hoarse or deep voice, vocal cord nodules. (Rare – pneumonia, aspiration, apnea, laryngospasm)
- **Miscellaneous** – headaches, poor sleep habits/ frequent waking, esophagitis, frequent ear infections or congestion, excessive salivation/drooling, pain-based aggression or clinging, needing to be held upright, intolerant of pressure on the stomach, tooth enamel erosion or 'moon craters' in teeth. (Rare - esophageal ulcers, strictures, peculiar torticollis-like neck arching, 'Sandifer's Syndrome,' Barrett's Esophagus, variable heart rate/blood pressure, fainting)

*Each child has a different set of symptoms.

If you **believe** your child may have GERD, contact your pediatrician or a gastroenterologist. If you **know** your child has GERD, contact Pediatric/Adolescent Gastroesophageal Reflux (PAGER) Association for the support you need. PAGER Association is a parent-led, non-profit organization providing information and support to parents of children with GERD.

PAGER Association offers:

- telephone, web and e-mail support
- literature on GERD
- newsletter with practical information from parents and professionals
- a research study of families that appear to have a genetic form of GERD

Pediatric/Adolescent Gastroesophageal Reflux Association, Inc.

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gergroup@aol.com - <http://www.reflux.org> - Tax exemption ID# 52-1800883

Membership dues are now free - Donations are tax deductible and will allow us to help more parents
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When a child has acid reflux, the whole family suffers

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