

Reflux

Reflux simply means that stomach contents are projected up into the esophagus.

Stomach contents contain gastric acid and reflux becomes painful.

The presence of reflux indicates incompetence of the lower esophageal sphincter (a flap of skin that separates the esophagus from the stomach). In the case of Rett girls it may be a problem with neurological nerve conduction to the sphincter and diaphragm.

Factors that contribute to the proper function of the sphincter include pressure, the angle of the heart when compared to the esophagus, the action of the diaphragm and gravity.

There are many pharmaceuticals that effectively treat reflux and prevent damage to the esophagus. Many complications can arise from untreated reflux and pharmaceuticals to prevent reflux are the most effective treatment.

Additional treatment suggestions:

1. To decrease stomach pressure onto the lower esophageal sphincter try small frequent meals.
2. Remain upright for twenty minutes after eating and possibly elevation of the head of the bed 6 inches. Safety is always first so do not shift the bed if it makes your child unsafe. As Rett girls do not sleep very well monitor closely to make sure a bed shift does not make them uncomfortable.
3. It is also suggested to avoid fats and chocolate, however Rett girls that are following a high fat diet either to help with epilepsy or because they are underweight can NOT do this.
4. Use of antacids after meals and before beds. Some antacids have been linked to an increase in osteoporosis so try not to overuse but it is better to manage pain than to worry about future bone disease.
5. Infant formulas have been created to prevent babies from spitting up. Infants have an immature digestive tract and often spit up after eating. These special anti-spit up formulas contain Rice Starch. It is typically the second ingredient in the formula. The idea is to make a 'food paste'; once food is ingested the rice starch makes it thick so even if the sphincter is incompetent the food can't go anywhere. You may want to add Rice Starch to your daughter's food to see if this helps. Start with a small amount first because sometimes a little is all that is needed.

When Rett girls cry it is very difficult to identify a cause without verbal communication. Make sure reflux is ruled out as a cause for inconsolable crying. Reflux typically occurs just after eating.

Always check with doctor when changing any feeding routine.