

Eleven+

guide.

Regurgitation

What is regurgitation?

Regurgitation is when food comes back into the mouth after it is swallowed. This may happen soon after swallowing, or later.

If this happens a lot, and doctors do not find a problem in your body causing it, it is called 'rumination syndrome'.

Rumination syndrome is not an illness. It is more like a learned 'habit' that your body gets used to doing after eating.

Why does it happen?

Regurgitation happens when the muscles around your stomach tighten, pushing food back up into your mouth.

There is no clear reason it starts for some people, although for others it starts after a certain event (for example illness, choking).

Some people get it with every meal, whilst others get it more at certain meals or times. The amount people feel aware it is going to happen or can 'control' it differs too.

What problems does it cause?

Over time, regurgitation can cause damage to the teeth or mean you don't get enough nutrition from food.

It can also be upsetting, embarrassing or frustrating. It can stop people enjoying food, or eating with others.

What can I do about it?

If regurgitation bothers you, the most helpful thing you can do is something called **diaphragmatic breathing**.

Eleven+

guide.

Regurgitation

What is diaphragmatic breathing?

Diaphragmatic breathing uses a muscle called the diaphragm to breathe very deeply. The diaphragm is shaped like a parachute and sits below the lungs and above the stomach.

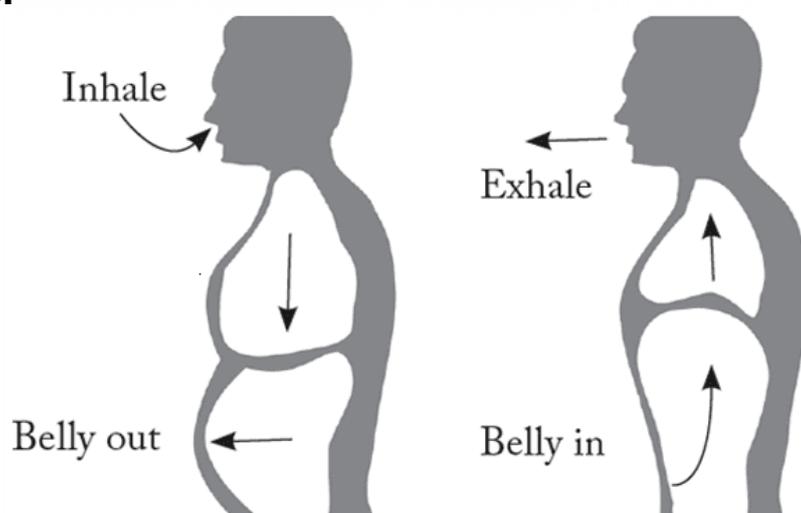
Diaphragmatic breathing is helpful for regurgitation because it relaxes the same muscles that tighten to cause regurgitation.

How do I use diaphragmatic breathing?

- 1) **Lie flat on your back with your knees bent** (you can also sit down with a straight back once you are used to it).
- 2) **Place one hand on your upper chest, and one on your stomach** (just under your ribcage).
- 3) **Inhale:** Breathe in through your nose, drawing your breath down towards your stomach. The hand on your stomach should rise, whilst the hand on your chest should be still.
- 4) **Exhale:** Exhale through pursed lips and let your stomach fall downward. Again, the hand on your chest should be still.
- 5) **Repeat for 5-10 minutes.**

Some people like to count along with the breaths, for example:

- **Inhale: 1, 2, 3, 4**
- **Exhale: 1, 2, 3, 4**



Eleven+

guide.

Regurgitation

When should I use it?

The more you practice diaphragmatic breathing, the more helpful it can be, as your stomach muscles get used to feeling relaxed.

Aim to use it at least once a day, though working up slowly to three or four times a day can be really helpful.

Pick times that are easy to remember and use it each day, such as after meals or before bed. If your regurgitation happens at certain times (such as after lunch), use it then.

Keeping it up

It can be really hard to start a new habit. These tips might help:

- Ask a family member or friend to remind you.
- Leave a note or sticker somewhere you will see it (eg the table).
- Set an alarm on your phone.
- Make a chart like below to record your hard work.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Lunch	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Dinner			✓	✓			
Bedtime	✓	✓		✓			

More help

If regurgitation affects important things in your life (eg feelings, friendships), talking to our team might be helpful - see 'Contacts' below.

Eleven+

guide.

Regurgitation

Contacts

This was written by the gastroenterology clinical psychology team, who support with feelings and experiences related to digestive issues.

✉ cuh.PaediatricPsychologyAdmin@nhs.net

☎ 01223 216878

References

Monagas J, Ritwik P, Kolomensky A, Acosta J, Kay D, Clendaniel L, & Hyman PE (2017). Ruminant Syndrome and Dental Erosions in Children. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*, 64(6), 930–932.

Sasegbon A, Hasan SS, Disney BR, & Vasant DH (2022). Ruminant syndrome: pathophysiology, diagnosis and practical management. *Frontline Gastroenterology*.



We are smoke-free: smoking is not allowed anywhere on the hospital campus. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:



Help accessing this information in other formats is available. To find out more about the services we provide, please visit our patient information help page (see link below) or telephone 01223 256998.



<https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/contact-us/accessible-information/>

Document history

Authors	Gastroenterology clinical psychologists
Pharmacist	N/A
Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
Contact number	01223 216878
Approval date	23 November 2022
File name	11+ Rumination Version1 November 2022.doc
Version number/ ID	1 / Document ID 102780