

Breastfeeding Pillows and Reflux

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Infant reflux (sometimes called infant acid reflux or Gastroesophageal Reflux (GER), is the condition where some contents of the stomach are spit out, usually shortly after feeding. It is common in infants because their sphincters are undeveloped, they have a shorter esophagus, and they lie down much of the time.

In infants, the ring of muscle between the esophagus and the stomach — the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) — is not yet fully mature, allowing stomach contents to flow backward. Eventually, the LES will open only when baby swallows and will remain tightly closed the rest of the time, keeping stomach contents where they belong. Babies that are lying flat while feeding are at higher risk of developing GER and the more serious Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD).

To learn more, go to <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/gerdinfant/>.

Keeping your baby in a more upright position when feeding can help prevent this. Gravity can help stomach contents stay where they belong. Better yet, in the early days and weeks, using “**laid-back**” breastfeeding positions can be very useful. See more at <http://www.biologicalnurturing.com/video/bn3clip.html>

Now, what does all this have to do with breastfeeding pillows? Well, as you can see below, most babies that are placed on these pillows are nursing in a horizontal position...



and that can lead to increased reflux and eventually to the unnecessary use of reflux drugs. When, in reality, this can be avoided by simply changing the way you use the pillow or changing the type of pillow you use.



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One pillow that insures proper positioning is called the “Pollywog”. It is a wedge shaped pillow.



<http://www.pollywogbaby.com/products/pollywog/bestbreastfeedingpillow.html>

Even though you may be using laid-back breastfeeding at first, eventually you will be nursing sitting up and may want to use these special pillows for added support. Position the pillow so it allows your baby to be at an angle while feeding – and, when your baby is a bit older, these pillows can help your baby start to explore his or her surroundings!

