

PRESCRIPTION OF FEED THICKENERS AND THICKENED FORMULAS FOR REFLUX

See NICE guidance www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng1 for management of infant reflux

Breast fed infants with frequent regurgitation associated with marked distress

1. ensure that a person with appropriate expertise and training carries out a breastfeeding assessment.
2. If symptoms continues despite a breastfeeding assessment and advice, consider alginate therapy for a trial period of 1–2 weeks. If the alginate therapy is successful continue with it, but try stopping it at intervals to see if the infant has recovered.

Bottle fed infants with frequent regurgitation associated with marked distress:

1. review the feeding history, **then**
2. reduce the feed volumes only if excessive for the infant's weight, **then**
3. offer a trial of smaller, more frequent feeds (while maintaining an appropriate total daily amount of milk) unless the feeds are already small and frequent, **then**
4. offer a trial of thickened formula (for example, containing rice starch, cornstarch, locust bean gum or carob bean gum).
5. If 1-4 is not successful, stop the thickened formula and try alginate therapy for 1-2 weeks

WARNING

Do NOT prescribe **GAVICON** concurrently with a thickened feed or thickening agent due to risk of bezoar formation

Prescription of thickened formulas

Powdered 'anti-regurgitation' formulas are available which thicken on mixing or on contact with stomach acid. Enfamil AR and SMA Staydown are ACBS approved for significant GOR. All are available over the counter for parents to buy. They have special instructions for preparation – advise parents to follow the packet instructions exactly.

Brand Name	Teat Size Required	Thickening Agent	Preparations	Cost
Aptamil Anti Reflux	Wide/variflow	Carob Bean Gum	900g tub	Not ACBS approved
Cow & Gate Anti Reflux	Wide/variflow	Carob Bean Gum	900g tub	Not ACBS approved
SMA Pro Anti-Reflux	Wide-variflow	Potato Starch	800g tub	Not ACBS approved
Enfamil AR	Standard	Rice Starch	400g tin	£3.80 for 400g
SMA Staydown	Standard	Corn Starch	900g tin	£7.80 for 900g

Prescription of feed thickeners

An alternative to commercial anti-regurgitation formulas is the addition of a thickening agent to formula milk. These thicken in the bottle, so need to be given with a wide or variflow teat.

Thickening agents can also be used with breastfed babies by mixing a little on a spoon and giving before a breastfeed:

Brand Name	Teat Size Required	Thickening Agent	Preparations	Cost
Carobel	Wide/variflow	Carob seed flour	135g carton with 1.7g scoop	£2.91 for 135g pack

Other thickening agents available contain significant calories and are only ACBS approved in infants <1yr with faltering growth – seek advice for a paediatrician or paediatric dietitian.

Instructions for giving Carobel to breast fed babies

- mix 1/2 level scoop of Carobel in 10mls of expressed breast milk. Leave for 3–4 minutes to thicken then stir again. Offer the baby 1–2 teaspoons of Carobel gel from a sterilised plastic spoon before putting to the breast.
- the amount needed will vary between babies. A further dose can be offered half way through breast feed or before being put to second breast

Instructions for using Carobel to thicken bottle feeds

- add ½ scoop to 90mls hand-warm feed. Shake well and leave to thicken for 3-4 minutes. Shake again and feed.
- thickness can be increased by using 1 scoop in 60mls
- wide/variflow teat will be required

Reviewing formula use

- when starting a thickened formula or thickening agent, review efficacy after two weeks. If successful, continue for 3 months or until weaning
- do not prescribe a thickened formula for longer than 6 months in total
- do not prescribe Gaviscon concurrently with a thickened feed or thickening agent