

# Pyloric Stenosis

## What is it?

**Pyloric stenosis** is a problem that most often causes forceful vomiting that can lead to dehydration. Normally, the **pylorus**, a muscular valve between the stomach and small intestine, holds food in the stomach until it's ready for the next step of digestion. In **pyloric stenosis**, the valve enlarges, making the opening of the pylorus smaller. This stops food from moving out of the stomach into the intestine.

When the pylorus is blocked, problems that result include:

1. **Vomiting after feeding:** Forceful vomiting occurs because the food cannot pass out of the stomach and into the intestines.
2. **Dehydration:** Frequent vomiting means a baby will not get enough fluids or the minerals, such as potassium and sodium, he or she needs to stay healthy.
3. **Persistent hunger:** Babies want to eat soon after vomiting because they aren't getting food.
4. **Stomach contractions:** There may be wave-like movement across the baby's belly. This is the stomach trying to force food through the narrowed pylorus.
5. **Changes in bowel movements:** Food does not get to the intestines, which means a baby with this can become constipated.
6. **Weight loss:** Frequent vomiting and the inability to digest food will cause weight loss.

## How common is it?

About 3 out of every 1,000 babies born each year have pyloric stenosis.

## What causes it?

The exact cause of pyloric stenosis is not known. Many factors may cause it, but more research is needed to understand the exact cause. Some things that increase the chance of having a baby with pyloric stenosis include:

- **Sex:** It's more often seen in firstborn boys.
- **Race:** It's more common in whites or northern European ancestry.
- **Premature birth:** It's more common in babies born before full-term.
- **Smoking during pregnancy:** Smoking almost doubles the chance.
- **Early antibiotic use:** Antibiotic use within the first few weeks of life or during late pregnancy can increase the chance.
- **Bottle-feeding:** unsure if it is formula or the action of bottle-feeding that increases the chance.
- **Family history:** more common in babies who had a family member who had it.

## How is it diagnosed?

It is usually diagnosed between 2 and 8 weeks of life. Babies who vomit every time after feeding may have pyloric stenosis. The doctor will perform tests to confirm it, and a blood test and images of the stomach may be needed to confirm the condition.

## How is it treated?

Surgery is usually required to correct pyloric stenosis. Before surgery, your baby might be given extra water and minerals to replace the fluids that were lost during vomiting. Your doctor will discuss all treatment options with you.



### For more information:

**Nationwide Children's Hospital**

<https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/conditions/pyloric-stenosis>

**Mayo Clinic**

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pyloric-stenosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351416>