NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.℠

Step-by-Step Guide to Managing Rumination

Posture: Sit in a seat with a back, so you can easily lean back and relax your abdominal muscles when needed. Try to avoid hunching over your food, sitting with knees pulled up to your chest, or crossing your arms around your stomach.

Pace: Keep a slow, even pace when you eat. Avoid eating super-fast, as this makes rumination more likely. Try to spend 15-20 minutes to complete a meal and 10 minutes or so for a smaller snack. It can be helpful to take breaks every 5 or so minutes to practice breathing and slow yourself down.

Food: Eat smaller amounts of food at a time. This is best done if you eat several smaller meals/snacks throughout the day. For some, this means eating only 1-2 bites at a time until you have learned how to control rumination and keep food down. Definitely steer clear of foods that you know make rumination worse, at least in the early stages of treatment. Aim for foods that have a lot of calories in a smaller amount as well for maintaining nutrition while working up to more regular meals/portions.

Fluid: It can be helpful to separate food and fluids to start. Do this by drinking no more than a few ounces with solid foods, then wait until the food has settled in your stomach and slowly sip on fluids between meals. Like food, taking smaller swallows and drinking slowly throughout the day helps you stay hydrated while avoiding worsening rumination.

Breathing: Use diaphragmatic breathing before and after every meal. No exceptions! Doing 5-10 total breaths at a nice slow pace is typically enough. This helps with alleviating abdominal contractions that are causing rumination (and pain and nausea). Doing breathing before and after meals helps teach the abdominal muscles they shouldn't contract during meals, which can eventually help reduce or stop rumination.

You must also use this technique any time you feel food coming back up and immediately after you re-swallow anything that comes up. Without pairing breathing with re-swallowing, it is likely that rumination will continue to happen because you haven't relaxed the muscles to stop them from contracting.

Try using the *Breathe2Relax* app for help practicing.

Re-swallow: Every time food comes up, keep that mouth closed and swallow the contents right back down. Every. Single. Time. This is critical to retraining your brain and stomach to return to normal eating. This is part of why less volume during meals is helpful, because there is less for you to re-swallow. You will likely have to re-swallow repeatedly during/after meals, and that's okay. The frequency of re-swallowing will decrease as you keep practicing.

Many people notice a warning sign before food enters their mouth: sometimes a pressure in their chest or stomach, or even the feeling of food sliding up their throat. If you feel these sensations, swallow your saliva and immediately begin diaphragmatic breathing. This will prevent food from entering your mouth altogether. If food does still enter your mouth, still re-swallow and start diaphragmatic breathing.

Distraction: Be sure you engage in a distracting activity after you finish eating. This helps to decrease the frequency of regurgitation also. Taking a light walk, playing games, talking to others are all good options (not jumping jacks…).