

# Feeding difficulties in the infant

Oct 21, 2020 | 0



[emergency](#), [Emergency Medicine](#), [General medicine](#), [general practice](#), [onthepods](#), [paediatrics](#)

Feeding difficulties are a common problem in infants and can cause a lot of concern for new parents who often present to the Emergency Department or their GP for help. In this podcast, Karly Casamento and Chris Elliot discuss an approach to early evaluation and management of feeding difficulties as well as how to reassure new parents.

**Summary Writer:** Lucy Coles

**Script Writers:** Karly Casamento and Chris Elliot

**Editor:** Chris Elliot

**Interviewer:** Karly Casamento

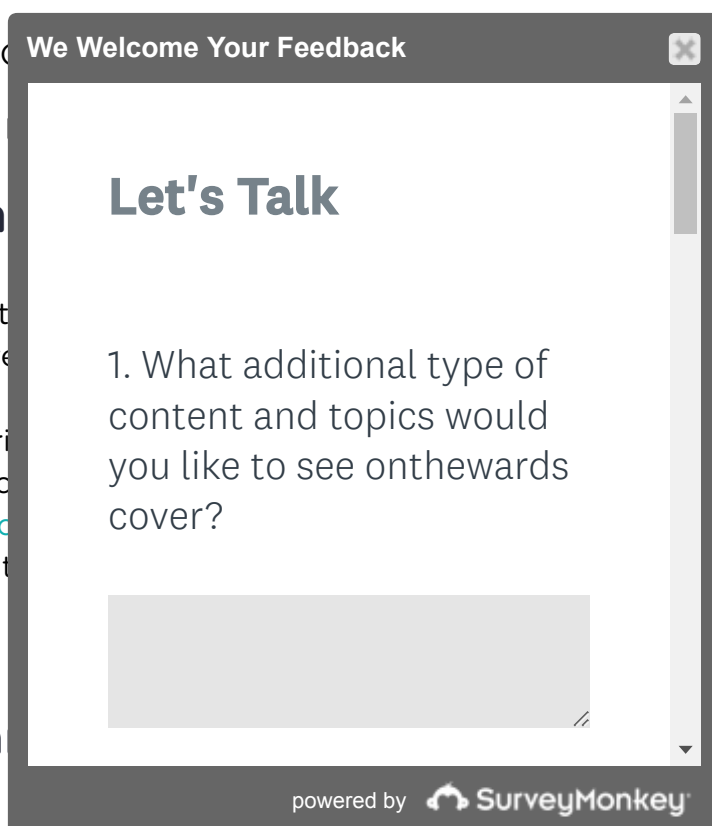
**Interviewee:** Chris Elliot

## About Dr Chris Elliot

Chris is a Consultant in Paediatrics at St George's Hospital, Sydney, and runs a private rooms. As well as being a Consultant, he is also a Lecturer at the University of New South Wales and writes for the [Journal of Paediatrics](#). He also teaches Advanced Paediatrics at St George's Hospital and Paediatrics at the days when he is not on call. He plays by themselves.

## About Dr Karly Casamento

Karly Casamento is an Advanced Trainee in General Paediatrics based out of [Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick](#). She is passionate about anything to do with the [health of babies](#) and children and is committed to improving junior doctor education, [mental health and wellbeing](#). She is currently undertaking a research project on virtual learning environments with the University of NSW. She dedicates most of her time to chasing around her two energetic young boys and trying to get them to bed on time.



# Feeding difficulties in the infant

*With Dr Chris Elliot, General and Developmental Paediatrician, Paediatric Multidisciplinary Feeding Clinic, St George Hospital, New South Wales, Australia*

## Introduction

Feeding difficulties are very common in infants, especially those with disabilities. Babies who struggle to feed are a cause of significant concern for new parents, who often take them to

the GP or Emergency Department. Karly Casamento and Chris Elliot discuss the early evaluation and management of this common presentation.

## Case

A three-week-old neonate is referred to the Emergency Department by her GP because she has not regained her birth weight. There is concern that her mother is not coping well. She has mastitis with cracked nipples, and is exclusively breastfeeding.

### 1. Red flags and common causes

- Red flag conditions: serious bacterial infection (SBI), neurological disorders, metabolic conditions, congenital cardiac defects, pyloric stenosis
- Common causes
  - feeding
  - parent s
  - reflux
  - constipa
  - parenta
  - social is


### 2. As

- A good history a and the baby's p
- History:
  - Screen f
  - Feeding
    - Breast or bottle, frequency, amount.
    - In the first six months, roughly six feeds per day with a wet nappy with every feed, if breast fed.
    - Ask about behaviour surrounding feeds - do they settle afterwards?
  - Growth:
    - Normal growth is very reassuring in presentations for feeding issues.
    - Birth weight should be regained by two weeks.
    - Growth should be plotted on a growth chart.
    - Make your assessment of parenting skills and coping. If you don't know any parenting skills yourself, assess parenting *confidence* (you can be tricked by confident, unskilled parents but it's a useful surrogate marker for the majority).

We Welcome Your Feedback

## Let's Talk

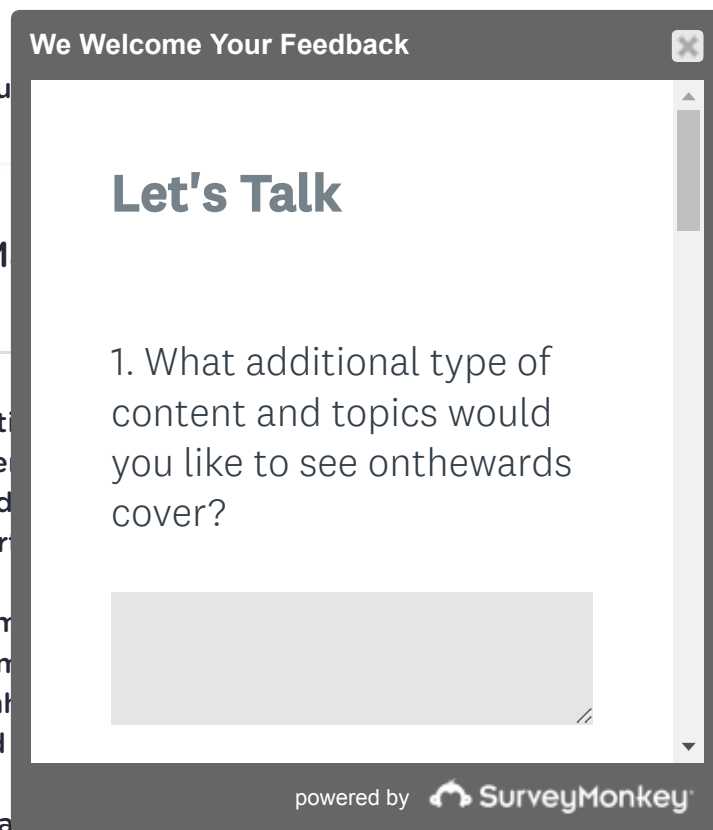
1. What additional type of content and topics would you like to see on the wards cover?

powered by 

- Examination:
  - End of bed assessment and escalate immediately if any concerns.
  - Top to toe: thorough paediatric examination.

### 3. Investigations

- Guided by clinical situation - it would be reasonable not to order any investigations if the history and examination are reassuring.
- Common investigations are:
  - BGL
  - FBC
  - EUC
  - urine cu



### 4. M

- Some presentat so that the pare that they have d
  - Parental support issues.
  - In this case, adm information to m
  - Proton pump int over-diagnosed prescribing.
  - Women with ma
- netting in place  
Reassure them  
ssion or social  
equate  
parents.  
er reflux is  
before

### 5. Take home messages

- It is common to feel uncomfortable assessing neonates with feeding difficulties, but a systematic approach and thorough assessment should allow you to feel confident making an assessment.
- Remember that parents are commonly very worried and might be expecting the worst. It is important to take the time to listen to their concerns and provide reassurance.

## Related Blogs

- [A day in the life of a paediatric registrar](#)

## Related Podcasts


- [The sick neonate](#)
- [Vomiting in the neonate](#)
- [Assessing and treating paediatric patients](#)
- [Communication in paediatrics](#)

**Tags:** #baby,#birth weight,#breastfeeding,#feeding difficulties,#General Practice,#infant,#mastitis,#neonate,#paediatric examination,#paediatrician,#paediatrics,#parental support,#parenthood,#parenting,#post natal depression,#proton pump inhibitors,#SBI

We Welcome Your Feedback ✕

### Let's Talk

1. What additional type of content and topics would you like to see onthowards cover?

powered by  SurveyMonkey