

Infant Conditions – Diagnostic Criteria & Referral Guidelines

This quick-reference guide is for chiropractic providers. It outlines key diagnostic criteria and red flags for common infant conditions, as well as indicators for when referral to a pediatrician or specialist is appropriate.

Torticollis

Diagnostic Criteria:

- Head tilt with rotation to opposite side.
- Limited cervical passive or active ROM.
- Palpable tightness or mass in SCM (fibromatosis colli possible).

Referral Indicators:

- No improvement after 4 weeks of conservative care.
- Neurologic signs (tone abnormalities, asymmetrical movement).
- Palpable SCM mass not improving.
- Suspected vertebral anomalies or plagiocephaly progression.

Otitis Media

Diagnostic Criteria:

- AOM: Rapid onset, middle ear effusion + signs of infection (fever, irritability, TM redness/bulging).
- OME: Middle ear effusion without acute signs of illness.

Referral Indicators:

- High/persistent fever.
- Bloody or purulent otorrhea.
- Suspected tympanic membrane perforation.
- >3 infections in 6 months or >4 in 12 months.
- Hearing loss or speech delay.

Constipation

Diagnostic Criteria (Rome V, infants/toddlers up to 4 yrs, ≥ 1 mo duration):

- ≤ 2 defecations per week.

- Excessive stool retention.
- Painful or hard BMs.
- Large-diameter stools.
- Large fecal mass in rectum.

(Fecal incontinence ≥ 1 /week if toilet-trained).

Referral Indicators:

- Failure to pass meconium in first 48 hours.
- Bilious vomiting, abdominal distension.
- Ribbon-like stools (possible Hirschsprung's disease).
- Failure to thrive or persistent severe constipation.

Reflux (GER/GERD)

Diagnostic Criteria:

- GER: Effortless spit-up, normal weight gain, no systemic illness.
- GERD: Reflux + complications: poor weight gain, pain/irritability, feeding refusal, respiratory signs.

Referral Indicators:

- Poor growth/failure to thrive.
- Forceful, bilious, or bloody vomiting.
- Apnea, cyanosis, or recurrent pneumonia.
- Hematemesis or significant esophagitis symptoms.

Colic

Diagnostic Criteria:

- Rule of 3's: Crying >3 hours/day, >3 days/week, >3 weeks.
- Rome IV: Infant <5 months, recurrent/prolonged crying/fussing, no failure to thrive or illness.

Referral Indicators:

- Fever, lethargy, poor feeding/weight gain.
- Bilious or bloody emesis.
- Bloody stools.
- Excessive irritability outside typical colic pattern.