



REFLUX DIET

The Problem With Acid Reflux

In adults and children, irritating acid juices may come up from the stomach into the esophagus and throat. This may occur at any time but is much more common when lying down. When the acid touches the lining of the esophagus, there is irritation and muscle spasms, which may affect you all the way up into the throat area. Often, this will create symptoms of “heartburn.” When this has gone on for some time, scarring of the esophagus may make the esophagus less sensitive, and the only discomfort may be in the throat itself.

Some of the symptoms that occur from acid reflux include coughing, soreness, burning, hoarseness, throat clearing, excessive mucus, bad taste, a sensation of a lump in the throat, wheezing, postnasal drip, choking spells, bleeding and nausea. In a small percentage of people, more serious problems result, including pneumonia, ulcers of the larynx, reduced mobility of the vocal cords and a pouch (diverticulum) of the upper esophagus. In children, the symptoms can be a little different and may include persistent vomiting, bleeding from the esophagus, respiratory symptoms, choking spells, recurrent pneumonia, asthma, swallowing problems and anemia. In some cases, unexplained fussiness and crying in children is due to acid reflux.

The following instructions are designed to help neutralize the stomach, reduce the production of acid and prevent acid from coming up in the esophagus. You should adopt enough of the suggestions to get relief from your symptoms. If you carry out most of these suggestions and still find no change, you should be in touch with me so that we can discuss it further and perhaps do further tests or start medication. It is important to realize, however, that healing of the irritated esophagus and throat will take time, and one should not expect immediate results.

DIET

Most often, the throat symptoms described above are due to dietary abuse. Certain foods are acids or irritants themselves; others will bring out stomach acid in large amounts. Both should be avoided. The following list of foods are especially known to be troublesome: coffee (even decaffeinated), tea, chocolate, cola beverages, citrus beverages and fruits, non-cola beverages containing caffeine, alcohol, highly spiced foods, fatty foods, candies, nuts, mints, whole milk and whole milk products. Some experts feel that two of the worst foods for promoting stomach acid are whole milk and beer.

Hard candies, gum, breath fresheners, throat lozenges, cough drops, mouthwashes, gargles, etc., may irritate the throat directly and will also stimulate the stomach to empty out acid. Avoid them!

Large amounts of liquid in the diet will tend to promote reflux since liquids tend to come up into the throat more easily than solids. Your meals should be bland. Three or four small feedings are preferable to one or two large meals. If you are overweight, it would be helpful to lose weight as well.

One should not eat for two to three hours prior to retiring to bed; it is advisable not to lie down right after eating.



POSTURE

As mentioned above, body weight is a significant factor in promoting reflux of stomach contents, and weight reduction is helpful. Pregnancy will markedly increase symptoms of heartburn and, sometimes, throat symptoms as well. This is partly due to the space taken up by the growing infant. One should avoid clothing that fits especially tight across the midsection of the body. It is helpful to practice abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing. This means you should concentrate on pushing out the stomach with each breath instead of expanding the chest. Avoid slumping when sitting. Avoid bending or stooping as much as you can.

For many people, acid reflux occurs the most at night and sets up the irritation that continues to bother them during the daytime. One of the most important things you can do is to sleep on a bed elevated at the head end. To do this, use wood, bricks or cinder blocks underneath the legs at the head of the bed. The elevation should be six to 10 inches but not high enough that you will slide down when sleeping. The use of pillows to get the head of the bed up is not effective because it causes the body to curl, and it is difficult to remain upright on them. Furthermore, pillows promote sleeping on the back, but it is far more desirable to sleep on the right side or on the stomach since this will allow gas to escape from the stomach and reduce the escape of acid material. Children and infants who may be refluxing should sleep on the stomach, not the back.

ANTACIDS

For a more vigorous program, you should try antacids. Gelusil II and Mylanta II are two popular brands. They are available without a prescription. Gaviscon® is not an antacid but floats on top of the stomach acids to prevent esophageal irritation. The dose of Gelusil II or Mylanta II is one or two teaspoons, but if symptoms are severe, one can take up to two tablespoons per dose as often as seven times per day. Such a program should not be continued for long periods without medical supervision. Antacid tablets are convenient, but liquids work faster. Antacids will interfere with the absorption of digitalis, Indocin, tetracycline, fluorides and isoniazid from the intestine.

In the beginning, you might wish to take antacids just at bedtime, but if symptoms are very persistent, they should be taken about 45–60 minutes after eating and every two hours between meals and at bedtime. Prescription medications are also available to reduce stomach acids, and these may be required in some people.

MEDICATIONS THAT PROMOTE REFLUX

Several different medications may increase stomach acid. These include progesterone (Provera, Ortho-Novum, Ovral and other birth control pills); theophylline (Theodur); anticholinergics (Donnatal, Scopolamine, Pro-Banthine, Bentyl and others); beta-blockers (Inderal, Tenormin, Corgard and others); alpha-blockers (Dibenzylin); dopamine; calcium channel blockers (Procardia, Cardizem, Isoptin, Calan and others); aspirin and aspirin-containing products; and other compounds for pain or arthritis, especially the group called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which are sold under several different brand names, including Nalfon, Motrin®, Rufen, Advil, Nuprin®, Indocin, Meclomen, Feldene, Clinoril and Tolectin. Vitamin C is also an acid and can cause stomach symptoms.



DIET FOR REFLUX

This diet is intended to prevent or reduce the backup or regurgitation of stomach contents into the esophagus to decrease any irritation resulting from this regurgitation and to decrease swallowing difficulty. Guidelines:

- Avoid eating large meals. Eat smaller, more frequent meals rather than one or two large meals per day. Eat at least three equal-sized meals or possibly four.
- Sit upright or stand during and after eating.
- Do not eat for two to three hours before bedtime.
- Include high-protein food with each meal.
- Certain foods are especially bothersome to the stomach and tend to cause acid production. Refer to the earlier list.
- Avoid any other foods that cause you to have heartburn.
- If you have some difficulty swallowing, try to select foods that are moist and easy to chew.
- Avoid hard candies, gum, etc., as previously listed.
- If you are overweight, reduce to your ideal weight. You may need the help of a dietician, and we would be happy to make a referral.

Foods for Diet

Beverages: Avoid large amounts of liquids—they may encourage regurgitation up into the esophagus. Also, avoid whole milk, 2% milk or cream and any beverages made with whole milk, 2% milk or cream. Avoid citrus juices and all alcohol.

You may have water, skim milk, buttermilk made from skim milk, nonfat dry skim milk and non-cola carbonated beverages.

Breads & Cereals: Consume four or more servings daily for good nutrition. Avoid egg breads, sweet rolls, doughnuts, quick breads, waffles, pancakes and any product made with whole milk or egg yolks.

You may have enriched white, whole wheat or rye bread, saltine crackers, soda crackers, graham crackers, matzo and all cereals.

Cheese: Avoid cheese made from whole milk, processed cheese or cheese spreads.

You may have low-fat cottage cheese and cheese made from skim milk or part-skim milk.

Dessert: Avoid any dessert containing chocolate, peppermint, nuts or coconut.

You may have fruit, fruit ice, gelatin, angel food cake, popsicles, vanilla wafers, animal crackers, cookies, ginger snaps, graham crackers, homemade cakes and pudding made from skim milk.

Eggs: Avoid eating too many eggs.

You may have one egg daily, including those used in cooking.

Fats: Avoid more than three teaspoons of fat daily. Avoid fried foods and gravy.

You may have items on the fat exchange list below.

Fruits: Avoid avocados, grapefruits, tangerines, oranges, lemons and limes.

You may have all other fruit.

Meats: Avoid cold cuts, fatty meats, frankfurters, sausage, fish canned in oil and fried meats.

You may have all other cuts of lean meat and seafood.

Nuts: Avoid all.

Miscellaneous: Avoid peppermint, spearmint, chocolate, lemon, curry, pepper, hot spices, chili powder, horseradish, olives and chewing gum.

You may have salt, mild spices, herbs, flavoring extracts, flour and vinegar. Consume vinegar with a meal to neutralize the acid quality.

Potatoes or Substitute: Avoid potato chips; any potatoes prepared with fats or milk are not allowed, including buttered, creamed or deep-fat fried. No granola-type cereals.

You may have white or sweet potatoes prepared with allowed fat, macaroni, noodles, spaghetti, rice and hot and dry cereals.

Soup: Avoid cream soups made with whole milk, cream or animal fat.

You may have chicken or beef broth and soups made from allowed foods.

Sweets: Avoid any candy containing chocolate, coconut, peppermint or nuts, hard candies, chewing gum, cough drops, breath fresheners and throat lozenges.

You may have honey, jam, jelly, sugar and marshmallows.

Vegetables: Avoid tomatoes and tomato products if they cause heartburn. Avoid vegetables prepared with items that are not allowed, including butter, cream or cheese. Avoid fried vegetables. You may have all other vegetables.

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Fat Exchange List: Foods that can be used in place of one tsp of butter or margarine:

(Level Measurements)

Butter = 1 tsp _____ Margarine = 1 tsp

Oil = 1 tsp _____ Lard/Bacon Fat = 1 tsp Shortening = 1 tsp

Mayonnaise = 1 tsp _____ French Dressing = 1 tsp

Italian Dressing = 2 tsp _____ Thousand Island Dressing = 2 tsp

Blue Cheese Dressing = 2 tsp _____ Caesar Dressing = 2 tsp

Russian Dressing = 2 tsp _____ Heavy Cream = 1 tbsp = ½ oz

Light Cream = 2 tbsp = 1 oz _____ Sour Cream = 2 tbsp = 1 oz

Half and Half = 3 tbsp = 1 ½ oz _____ Liquid Cream Substitute = 3 tbsp = 1 ½ oz

Bacon, crisp = 1 slice _____ Cream Cheese = 1 tbsp