



## Everything You Need to Know About Acid Reflux

### Symptoms of GERD (acid reflux)

You may have all symptoms of GERD or just a few. GERD symptoms can vary from person to person. Some people may experience all the GERD symptoms while others notice only one or two. Similarly, the severity level may be different, depending on the person, but it is important that you do not ignore any signs, even if you think they may not be significant.

#### **1. Heartburn.**

The most common symptom is a burning sensation in the chest and/or throat. Some people may also experience a sour or acidic taste in their mouth.

#### **2. Difficulty swallowing**

This is often caused by what is known as esophageal stricture, which is the narrowing of the esophagus. Acid exposure causes damage to the lining of the esophagus, and as this damage heals, it forms scar tissue that causes the esophagus to tighten or narrow, which can result in difficulty swallowing.

#### **3. Dry cough.**

Some GERD sufferers, especially children, do not have heartburn, but rather experience a dry cough and asthma-like symptoms. Unfortunately, this is often mistaken for allergies, and the true cause is not discovered until more serious complications develop. If you have a persistent dry cough, it is a good idea to visit your doctor to make sure that a bigger problem isn't being overlooked.

**4. Hoarseness and sore throat.**

GERD affects the throat and larynx and can cause irritation or inflammation that results in a sore throat and/or raspy voice.

**5. Acid reflux.**

Many people experience the regurgitation of food and liquid, often accompanied by a burning sensation in the throat and a sour taste in the mouth.

**6. Lump in the throat.**

Some GERD sufferers say that they often feel like there is a lump in their throat. It is sometimes described as feeling as if food was not swallowed properly and is still sitting in the throat. This can create a panic reaction or a sensation of choking.

**7. Bleeding.**

Stomach acid can erode the tender tissues of the esophagus, sometimes causing an open sore to form, also known as an esophageal ulcer. This lesion can cause pain when swallowing as well as occasional bleeding.

**8. Chest pain.**

The heartburn often associated with GERD can sometimes mimic the symptoms of a heart attack. Studies have found that chest pain caused by GERD can be 'squeezing' in nature and can actually radiate to the back of the neck, up the jaw, and down the arms. If you experience any of these symptoms, it is important that you seek medical attention immediately to rule out the possibility of a heart attack.

**9. Erosion of teeth and gums.**

Since acid often reaches the mouth, it can cause damage to your teeth and gums. It is recommended that you rinse your mouth with water regularly and brush with a toothpaste that protects tooth enamel.

**10. Difficulty breathing.**

Although this is rare, some people will report a difficulty in breathing or an inability to take a deep breath. This is usually because the acid irritates the windpipe, causing an inflammation.

## Diet and Acid Reflux

### **Foods to avoid**

Oranges and orange juice, lemons and lemonade, grapefruit and grapefruit juice, tomato and tomato juice, cranberries and cranberry juice, Raw onions, peppers, radishes, french fries, mashed potatoes, Fatty ground beef, marbled sirloin, chicken nuggets, buffalo wings, fried meat, Whole milk, chocolate milk, ice cream, high fat cream cheese or sour cream, High fat grain products (cheese bread or products made with whole milk), Caffeinated beverages, whole milk, alcohol, carbonated beverages, Strong mustard, chili sauces, creamy salad dressing, black pepper, vinegar, curries, pickles, mint.

This list is not all inclusive. The best way to find out what foods could be causing you a problem is by keeping a symptom/food diary. Consulting with a registered dietitian will help you develop an anti-acid reflux meal plan.

### Home Remedies

#### **1. Water.**

Water will help dilute stomach acids which will reduce the risk of reflux. Try to drink some water 30 minutes after a meal.

#### **2. Fennel.**

Fennel seeds contain a substance called Anethole which is known to suppress stomach and intestinal tract spasms. Chew 1/2 teaspoon after a meal or enjoy fennel and chamomile tea, which can have a soothing effect on the digestive system and reduce reflux. Remember to sip the tea slowly.

#### **3. Applesauce**

#### **4. Ginger tea (decaf)**

#### **5. Apple Cider Vinegar.**

This is one of the most popular home remedies and is effective because it contains enzymes

known to prevent acid reflux and heartburn. Add a teaspoon to 1/2 glass of water and drink 30 minutes before or 30 minutes after a meal.

#### **6. Anise decaf tea or Aloe juice**

This remedy may reduce the amount of acid in your stomach and prevent heartburn.

#### **7. Probiotics.**

Probiotics are the good bacteria that exist in your gastrointestinal tract and are directly connected to the health of your immunity system. When there is an imbalance, your ability to fight illness and disease is compromised. By taking probiotic supplements with your GERD diet, you can restore this balance to achieve a properly functioning stomach and digestive system.

#### **8. Maintain an upright posture.**

Refrain from slouching while sitting or standing, particularly after a meal. This will help facilitate the proper functioning of the digestive system. Also, going for a walk after a large meal can help lower stomach acid and speed along digestion.

#### **9. Don't smoke**

Tobacco causes an increase in acid reflux.

#### **10. Avoid wearing clothing that is tight around the abdominal area.**

#### **11. Avoid eating too much or eating too fast or eating spicy foods**

#### **12. Avoid eating within three hours of bedtime.**

Since GERD symptoms are often worse in the evening, it is best not to eat too close to retiring.

#### **13. Sleep on your left side.**

Sleeping on your left side helps prevent acid was getting up into your esophagus

#### **14. Elevate the head of your bed 6-8 inches**

Do this by securing wood blocks under the bedposts—just using extra pillows will not help

**15. Reduce stress.**

Many digestive disorders, including GERD, have been linked to elevated stress levels. Learning how to manage stress can help reduce symptoms as well as contributing to your overall health and well-being.

**Medications**

Histamine-2 (H2) Blockers

Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

Prokinetics

Tums, Maalox, Rolaids and Mylanta – These are over the counter

Your doctor may choose to prescribe a medication to help if the above interventions are not completely effective.

