

ESOPHAGEAL REFLUX

In some people, irritating stomach acids may leak out of the stomach and into the esophagus and throat. This causes irritation and muscle spasms in the throat. Some of the symptoms include coughing, burning or soreness, hoarseness, throat clearing, excess mucus (post-nasal drip), bad taste, or a sensation of a lump in the throat.

The following instructions are designed to:

- Decrease pressure on the abdomen
- Eliminate esophageal irritants
- Neutralize stomach acid

You should use as many of these suggestions as needed to get relief. If these measures do not help or if your symptoms get worse, you should notify your physician.

1. Take an antacid in liquid form (Gelusil, Maalox, etc.) 20 to 30 minutes after meals and at bedtime.
2. If you are overweight, you should lose weight.
3. Diet restrictions help control symptoms. A bland diet divided into multiple small meals is recommended. You should avoid highly seasoned food. Care should be taken to chew food properly.
4. Alcohol, tobacco, and coffee are irritants to the esophagus and should be avoided. Alcohol and coffee also stimulate stomach secretions.
5. Do not eat for three to four hours before retiring.
6. For night-time relief, sleep with the head of your bed elevated, since symptoms of reflux are more likely to occur if you lie flat. The best way to achieve elevation is to place cinder blocks, wood, or bricks under the legs of the head of the bed. The desired elevation ranges from 4 to 11 inches (with 8 inches a customary average). If this is not practical, sleep on two or three pillows. Sometimes sleeping on the right side prevents distressing attacks.
7. Clothing that fits tightly across the mid-section of the body should be avoided. Women should not wear girdles. Men should not wear tight slacks or tight belts. Use of "abdominal supporting belts" should be prohibited.
8. Prolonged periods of bending or stooping may aggravate reflux. This includes activities such as gardening and exercising requiring lifting or bending.