



HEALTH INFORMATION

Acid Reflux

What is Acid Reflux?

There is a circular band of muscle (a sphincter) at the junction between the oesophagus and stomach. This relaxes to allow food down, but then normally tightens up and stops food and acid leaking up (refluxing) into the oesophagus. The sphincter acts like a valve. Acid Reflux is when acid from the stomach leaks up into the gullet (oesophagus). Chronic Acid Reflux is known as Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) when the ring of muscle at the bottom of the oesophagus (gullet) becomes weakend.

This is common but in most cases it is not known why the sphincter does not work so well. In some cases the pressure in the stomach rises higher than the sphincter can withstand - for example, during pregnancy, after a large meal, or when bending forward. If you have a hiatus hernia (a condition where part of the stomach protrudes into the chest through the diaphragm), you have an increased chance of developing reflux.

Symptoms

The condition may cause:

- Heartburn
- Pain in the upper abdomen and chest
- Feeling sick
- An acid taste in the mouth
- Bloating
- Belching
- A burning pain when you swallow hot drinks. Like heartburn, these symptoms tend to come and go, and tend to be worse after a meal
- Your symptoms may be worse after eating, when lying down and when bending over

Treatment

A medicine which reduces the amount of acid made in your stomach is a common treatment and usually works well, this may be purchased over the counter or prescribed by your General Practitioner (GP). Some people take short courses of medication when symptoms flare up. Some people need long-term daily medication to keep symptoms away.

Tests are not usually necessary if you have typical symptoms. Many people experiencing acid leaking up (refluxing) into the gullet (oesophagus) are diagnosed with 'presumed acid reflux'. In this situation they have typical symptoms and the symptoms are eased by treatment. Tests may be carried out if symptoms are severe, or do not improve with treatment.

Improving your condition

- Eat smaller and more frequent meals, rather than three large meals per day
- Avoid eating or drinking 'trigger' foods such as: chocolate; tomatoes; alcohol; fatty foods or spicy foods, caffeine is also an exacerbating factor
- Try to relax – stress can make symptoms worse
- Try to maintain a healthy weight – additional fat around the abdomen can worsen symptoms
- Look to stop smoking – smoking can irritate the digestive system and worsen symptoms and, as smoking damages taste receptors, this can lead to overuse of salt, sugars and spices also worsening symptoms
- Medication can worsen symptoms, if you are concerned please discuss with your General Practitioner (GP)

Websites for further information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/heartburn-and-acid-reflux/

www.nhsinform.scot/illness-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/gastro-oesophageal-reflux-disease-gord

www.medigold-health.com

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