

Heart Burn

Heartburn is a symptom you feel when acids in your stomach flow back into the esophagus. (The esophagus is the tube that carries food from throat to your stomach). This backward movement of stomach acid is called reflux. The acid can burn and irritate the esophagus, throat, and vocal cords. Heartburn has nothing to do with the heart. When you have heartburn often you may have a condition called "**Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease**", or "**Gerd**."

HOW DOES IT OCCUR?

At the bottom of the esophagus there is a ring of muscle called a "**Sphincter**." It acts like a valve. When you swallow food, the "*Sphincter*" opens to let the food pass into the stomach. The ring then closes to keep the stomach contents from going back into the esophagus. If the stomach is weak or too relaxed, the stomach acid and food flow backward into the esophagus. Because the esophagus does not have the protective lining that it should have, the acid causes pain. The "*Sphincter*" muscle does not work properly if you are:

- overweight, • pregnant, • eat too much,
- have a hiatal hernia,
- laying down too soon after eating or
- wearing tight clothes that push on your stomach.

FOODS THAT MAY MAKE HEARTBURN WORSE

Chocolate, onions, tomato based foods, peppermint, citrus foods such as orange juice, and spicy foods.

HEARTBURN SYMPTOMS

- Acid or sour taste in your mouth.
- Belching.
- A feeling of bloating or fullness in the stomach.

These symptoms tend to happen after very large meals and especially with activity as bending or lifting after meals. The symptoms may be made worse by lying down or by wearing tight clothing.

TREATMENT OF HEARTBURN

- Take non-prescription antacids after meals.
- At bedtime eat a light meal.
- Avoid certain foods or drink that make symptoms worse.
- Wait an hour or longer after eating before you lie down.
- In bed use more than one pillow so that your head is higher than your stomach. This allows gravity to help keep food from backing up.
- If the simple measures above do not relieve the symptoms, see your Health Care Provider.
- There are also prescription medicines that help reduce stomach acid.
- Don't forget to lose weight if you are overweight.
- Don't smoke!

"I will look to the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth" Psalm 121:1-2.