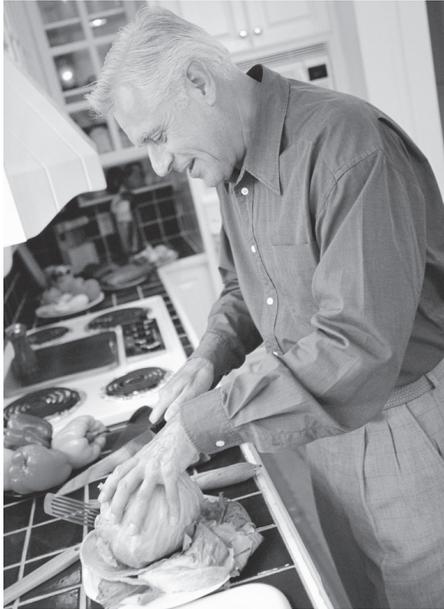


Heartburn and Reflux

Hearthburn and reflux occurs when stomach acid flows back into the esophagus.



The backflow of stomach acid is caused when the muscle at the base of the esophagus (lower esophageal Sphincter or L. E. S.) relaxes too much and allows the acids to flow backward into the esophagus.

When this acid comes in contact with the lining of the esophagus, it causes a burning sensation.

Let your doctor know if you are taking antacids three or more times per week. It could be the sign of something more serious. Be sure your doctor knows if you are taking any other medications.

Improve your health and enhance the quality of your life. Talk to your doctor if you are having chronic heartburn or similar symptoms.

Limit or avoid the following food groups

These types of foods can irritate the stomach and esophagus:

Spicy, Acidic or Heavily Seasoned Foods

Tomato-based foods such as pizza, ravioli, lasagna, Mexican food like tacos

Fatty Foods

Junk food, fast food, hot dogs, french fries and other fried foods

Citrus Fruits and Juices

Grapefruit, oranges, lemons, tomato juice

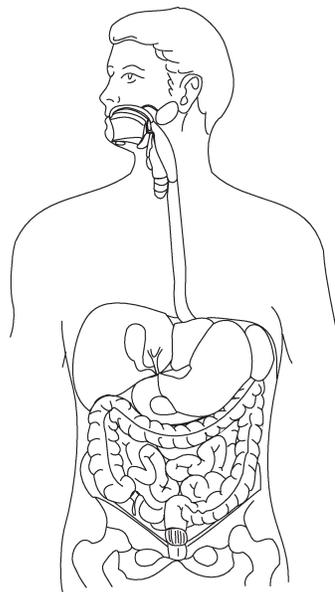
Candy

Chocolate and mints

Beverages

Alcohol, coffee, tea, and soda

Eat moderately. Don't overeat.



What can I do to help my symptoms?

- ✓ Stop smoking or reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke per day.
- ✓ Raise the head of your bed onto a block four to six inches high.
- ✓ Avoid eating at least three hours before lying down.
- ✓ Do not exercise right after eating.
- ✓ Avoid tight fitting clothing.
- ✓ Lose weight, if needed.

If Gastroesophageal reflux is left untreated the following complications can occur:

- ✓ Esophagitis - an inflammation of the esophagus
- ✓ Strictures - a narrowing of the esophagus
- ✓ Ulcerations - small holes in the lining of the esophagus
- ✓ Barrett's Esophagus - changes in the lining of the esophagus that could lead to cancer
- ✓ Laryngitis - inflammation or sore throat

By following some basic lifestyle changes and your doctor's recommendations, symptoms of reflux can often be reduced.

If you have problems or questions about heartburn and reflux, consult your VA primary care physician.