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Take Ownership of Your Health — Lead with a Healthy Lifestyle!

Lifestyle Changes to Manage Your Heartburn

GERD (or acid reflux) occurs when food and acids from the stomach leak back, or reflux, into the esophagus. GERD and its most frequent symptom of heartburn can be aggravated by foods, certain medications, and other factors. If you have a child affected by GERD, consult your pediatrician regarding lifestyle changes that may provide relief. Some other suggestions to improve your heartburn symptoms are:

- Don't go to bed with a full stomach. Eat meals at least two to three hours before lying down—this will give food time to digest.
- Don't overeat. Decrease the size of portions at meal times, or try eating four to five small meals instead of three large ones.
- Eat slowly. Take time to eat -- don't rush.
- Stay away from foods and beverages that trigger your heartburn symptoms (for example, onions, peppermint, chocolate, caffeine-containing beverages such as coffee, citrus fruits or juices, tomatoes or high-fat foods).
- If you are overweight, losing weight can help relieve your symptoms.
- Stop smoking. Nicotine, one of the main active ingredients in cigarettes, can weaken the lower esophageal sphincter, the muscle that controls the opening between the esophagus and stomach, preventing the acid-containing contents of the stomach from entering the esophagus.
- Avoid alcohol. If your aim is to unwind after a stressful day, try exercise, walking, meditation, stretching, or deep breathing instead of drinking alcohol.
- If your heartburn is worse when lying down, raise the head of your bed so that your head and chest are higher than your feet. You can do this by placing six-inch blocks under the bed posts at the head of the bed.
- Keep a diary or heartburn log. Keep track of when heartburn hits and the specific activities that seem to trigger the incidents.

Source: WebMD