

Reducing Heartburn

Most cases of heartburn can be prevented by following these home treatment tips.

- Change what and how you eat.
 - Eat smaller meals. Having a very full stomach increases your chances of having heartburn.
 - Do not lie down or exercise for 2 to 3 hours after you eat. When you are sitting up, gravity helps drain food and stomach acid into your stomach. Avoid eating large meals and snacks just before bedtime.
 - Avoid chocolate, fatty or fried foods, and peppermint- or spearmint-flavored food.
 - Do not drink alcohol, including beer or wine; coffee and other caffeinated drinks; or carbonated drinks.
 - Limit acidic foods, such as grapefruit, oranges, tomatoes, or vinegar.
 - Limit spicy foods that contain lots of pepper or chilies.
 - Eat foods that are high in protein and low in fat.
- Decrease pressure on your stomach.
 - Avoid tight clothing. Tight belts, waistbands, and panty hose that press on the stomach may make your symptoms worse.
 - Put blocks underneath your bed frame or use a foam wedge under your mattress to raise the head of your bed 6 in. (15 cm) to 8 in. (20 cm). Using extra pillows to raise your head does not work because pillows cause you to bend at your waist, which squeezes stomach acid up farther and can make heartburn worse.
 - Avoid lying on your right side.
 - Be careful when lifting and bending. Bending over tends to increase reflux. When lifting, bend at the knees.
- Do not take aspirin, products that contain aspirin (such as Alka-Seltzer), or other [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs \(NSAIDs\)](#), which can irritate the esophagus and stomach, or take them with food or an antacid. For mild to moderate pain relief, try another nonprescription medicine, such as acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol).
- Make sure that you stand or sit up when you swallow pills. Take a few sips of water to lubricate your throat before you swallow the medicine. Drink a full glass of water to swallow the medicine. Do not lie down right after you take a medicine.
- Do not smoke or use other tobacco products. Smoking causes the valve between the esophagus and the stomach to relax and not close completely. This allows stomach acid to back up (reflux) into the esophagus.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Lose weight if you are overweight. Being overweight puts added pressure on your stomach and increases the chance that stomach acid will back up into the esophagus. Even losing a few pounds (kilograms) can decrease the chance of developing heartburn or reduce your symptoms.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Decrease stress.

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