

Acid Reflux

How carers, nurses and family can help

What is acid reflux?

Acid reflux (also called gastro-oesophageal reflux / GERD) happens when stomach acid flows back up into the oesophagus. This can irritate the lining of the food pipe and make swallowing more uncomfortable.

Common symptoms include:

- Heartburn or burning chest pain;
- Regurgitation (acid or food coming back up);
- Sour or bitter taste in the mouth;
- Chest discomfort after eating;
- Worsening symptoms when lying flat or bending over;
- Hoarse voice;
- Excessive throat clearing;
- Sensation of lump or tightness in the throat;
- Difficulty swallowing especially tablets;
- Too much mucous or phlegm in throat.

Some patients do not get obvious symptoms of reflux. This is called “**silent reflux**” and is more difficult to detect.

Reflux can sometimes **cause or worsen swallowing difficulties**.

Reducing reflux symptoms:

If reflux is part of your symptoms, you may find it helpful to:

- Avoid lying down straight after meals;
- No food 2-3 hours before bedtime;
- Limit foods that trigger reflux, such as:
 - Spicy or fried foods
 - Tea and coffee
 - Alcohol – white wine and spirits
 - Citrus fruits, fruit juices
 - Tomato-based foods
 - Chocolate
 - Fizzy drinks
 - Mints
 - Milk
- Avoid overeating / have smaller meals more often;
- Chew thoroughly;
- Stay well hydrated;
- Avoid food before lifting heavy items, bending or stooping;
- Lose clothing;
- Lose weight.

Medications to help reflux:

Talk to your GP or pharmacist to discuss whether there are any medications that could reduce your acid reflux. It is important to consider what other medications you may also be taking and the timing of reflux medication, to get the best results.

Author: Speech & Language Therapy team

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