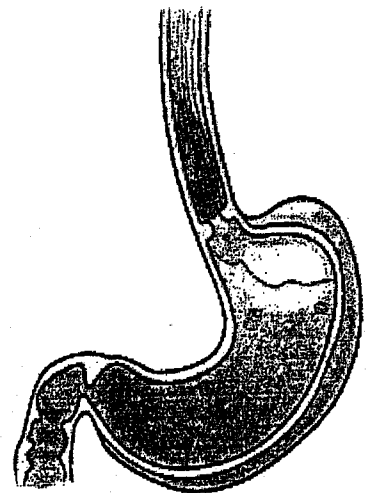


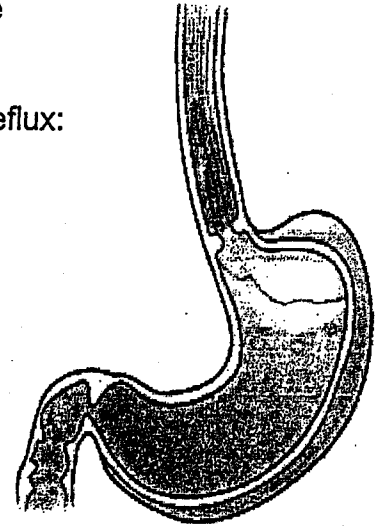
Acid Reflux & Swallowing Problems

Acid reflux is a common problem. It occurs when stomach acid flows back into the esophagus and throat. About 18-30% of people will likely develop acid reflux. Heartburn is one symptom of acid reflux. Acid reflux can also affect how a person swallows. This booklet tells you about acid reflux and what you can do to help control it.



But I don't have heartburn!

- Not all people with acid reflux have common signs like heartburn.
- Some people have the following problems from acid reflux:
 - Hoarse voice
 - Phlegm
 - Throat clearing
 - Sore throat
 - Problems swallowing
 - Feeling there is a lump in the throat
 - Coughing
 - Post-nasal drip
- Some people have no obvious signs of acid reflux at all. This is called silent reflux. We can see signs of acid reflux during the scope exam.



What the Swallowing Study Scope Shows Us:

We often see one or more of the following:

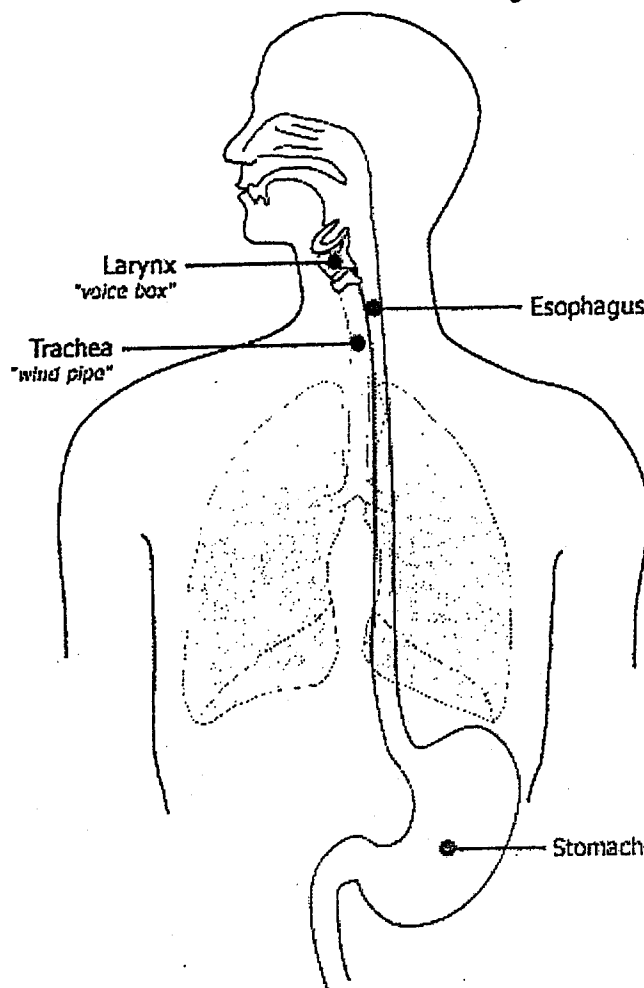
- Swelling in the back of the throat above the opening to the esophagus (food tube)
- Redness and soreness in the tissue around the throat and voice box
- Swelling and soreness around the vocal cords
- Changes in the lining at the back of the voice box

During the Swallow Study we see that:

- People often feel the need to swallow many times after a single mouthful of food - even after all of the food has left the throat. They may even find it hard to swallow saliva. This is a sign the muscle at the top of the esophagus is irritated.
- The actual swallow is normal and safe – although people might feel like they have a lump or golf ball in their throat!!

What is Happening?

- Acid and enzymes from the stomach are flowing back into the esophagus and throat. They can enter the larynx and even reach the back of the mouth up to the nose.
- It is not usually that too much acid is being produced. It is more likely that the acid is leaving the stomach in the wrong direction and irritating sensitive tissue along the way!



What is the Treatment?

It often includes medication, behaviour and eating changes.

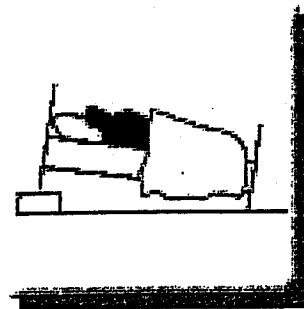
Medication:

- Reflux is really a movement or motility problem. It is hard to control the movement problem. So we tend to target the heart of the problem, which is the acid. Medications which reduce the amount of acid produced are often used. Some types of medications "turn off" acid secretion in the stomach (like Prevacid, Losec, and Nexium). In some people with mild reflux problems, an antacid may be advised (like Zantac or Ranitidine). In other people a mixture of medications may be used.
- You should also know that some medications can make your reflux worse. Check with your doctor and pharmacist about any new or current medications.

Behaviour:

In a recent study of people with reflux affecting their throat and swallowing, the **most important steps** which made a change were to:

1. avoid lying down after a meal and eating or drinking for 2-3 hours before bed.
2. raise the head of the bed when sleeping (at least 6 inches)



Smoking



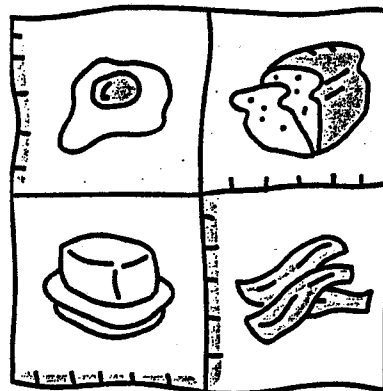
If you smoke, the tobacco can make your reflux worse. Tobacco causes many things to happen. It cuts back on saliva which acts as an acid shield. It speeds up acid production. It can also relax the sphincter between the stomach and the esophagus to allow more reflux.

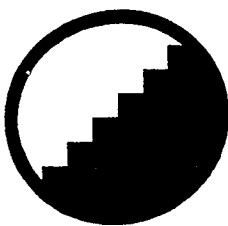
Food

... can't live without it! But, there are a few changes you may wish to try which may help with your reflux.

What you eat, when you eat, and how much you eat may be helpful or hurtful! Eating does not directly cause reflux but can make it worse.

Think about the "Steps to Freedom" Elaine Magee outlines in her book *Tell Me What to Eat if I Have Acid Reflux* (2002, Career Press Books, www.careerpress.com, ISBN Number 1-56414-574-3). This book is a useful resource which includes tons of basic information and recipes.





10 Food Steps to Freedom

(taken from from Elaine Magee's *Tell Me What to Eat if I Have Acid Reflux*, 2002, Career Press Books, www.careerpress.com, ISBN Number 1-56414-574-3)

Step 1

Eat small meals often during the day.

This equals 5-6 small meals each day. Try to eat when you are hungry and avoid going long times between eating. The bonus is that many people tend to eat less, be more comfortable, and burn more calories while they digest their food!



Why eat less food more often?

For a couple of reasons. A large meal stays in the stomach longer. This means more time for the stomach to produce and churn around acid. Also, larger meals fill the stomach and cause more pressure. More pressure means the muscle between the stomach and the esophagus is more likely to open.

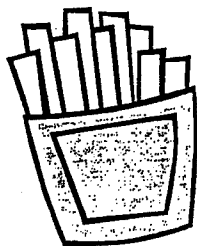
Drinking lots of fluids with meals will fill up the stomach faster. You may find it better to drink most of your fluids between meals.

And keep in mind the rule of thumb: try to avoid lying down after your meal and eating or drinking for 2-3 hours before going to bed.

Step 2

Try to lose some extra weight – if you need to.

This can be easier said than done, but is an important part of controlling reflux. Extra weight puts more pressure on the stomach and can make reflux worse.



Step 3

Avoid eating high fat meals and foods.

- High fat grain products such as doughnuts, biscuits, croissants, muffins, pies, cakes, cookies, pasta with cream sauce
- Fried meat, fish, poultry, bacon, sausages
- Potato chips, french fries, & other deep fried snack foods
- High fat dairy products – cream, ice-cream, cheese with more than 20%MF
- Limit added fats such as excess butters, margarine, gravies

This can help reflux and may also help you lose weight if needed. High fat and fried foods are believed to weaken the sphincter between the stomach and esophagus and make reflux worse. Some researchers say it is the volume of the meal, not the high fat food, that may be the problem. But people often find that they tend to overeat higher fat foods than lower fat options. So for most people it is a good idea to go easy on high fat food choices.

Step 4

Limit your intake of foods known to weaken the sphincter between the stomach and esophagus.

- Fried or fatty foods
- Chocolate
- Peppermint and spearmint
- Garlic & onions



Some drinks may cause the stomach to produce more acid. Limit intake of these drinks, especially before bed (by the way, we keep making acid at night).

- Coffee – even decaf (it is the protein in the coffee bean that is the culprit)
- Tea and pop that contain caffeine
- Alcohol



Step 5

Limit foods which increase acid in the stomach. You'll notice some of these were already listed above!

- Coffee – even decaf (it is the protein in the coffee bean that is the culprit)
- Tea and pop that contain caffeine
- Calcium in milk. It should be noted that calcium is an important nutrient and many people do not get enough of it. When choosing milk, go for the lower fat kinds. Avoid milk with added calcium. Even though most people are advised to get 3-5 servings of milk products each day, 2-3 cups of milk in a varied diet is enough for most people.

Step 6

Limit foods that can affect the sensitive lining of the throat and esophagus.

- Citrus fruits and juices
- Tomato and tomato products
- Pepper
- Chile pepper



Some people find small amounts of these foods do not cause any problems while others avoid some of these foods altogether. Do what works best for you.

Step 7

- Watch out for foods that can cause bloating and pressure on the stomach.
 - Carbonated drinks (bubbly or fizzy drinks)
 - Raw vegetables
 - Dried peas and beans
 - Broccoli
 - Brussels sprouts
 - Cabbage
 - Cauliflower
 - Corn
 - Onion
 - Turnip
 - Unpeeled apples
 - Melons



All people do not react to these foods the same way. You know your own body and how it reacts to these foods and can make changes as you need to.

Step 8

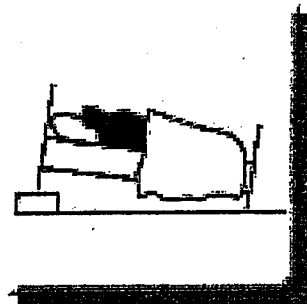
Have your “heartburn helper” on the ready.

Saliva is a fluid that can help protect your throat and esophagus from harmful acid. Try these tips to help get your saliva flowing:

- chewing gum (not peppermint or spearmint)
- drinking plenty of water – mainly between meals
- eating sweet pickles

Step 9

Don't eat for 2-3 hours before bed (some folks say up to 4 hours!)



Step 10

Raise the head of the bed at least 6 inches.

As was said before, this is a major step in controlling reflux. During the night, there is less movement throughout your esophagus and saliva flow is reduced. The stomach keeps making acid at night. Even in people who do not notice heart burn at night, the longer acid “rests” in the esophagus and throat the more damage it can do. Sleeping on an slope of 6 inches or so helps to keep food from flowing back into your esophagus.

Acid Reflux & Swallowing Problems

Glossary

Acid Reflux: The backward flow of stomach acid and contents into the esophagus and throat.

Antacid: A drug that weakens the stomach acid.

Enzymes: Small proteins that digest food.

Esophagus: The tube that connects the mouth to the stomach.

Larynx: The voice box.

Motility: Muscle movement that pushes food through the stomach and intestines.

Saliva: The fluid made by glands in the mouth.

Scope Exam: A thin tube with a light and lens on the end is used to look at the inside of the throat.

Sphincter: A band of muscle that opens and closes where the stomach and the esophagus connect.

Vocal Cords: Folds in the voice box that vibrate to make voice sounds.