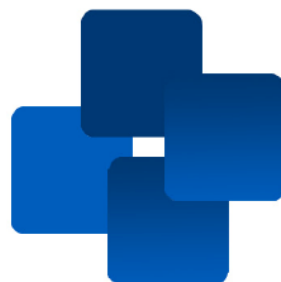


Patient Information

Acid reflux

Ears, Nose and Throat Department



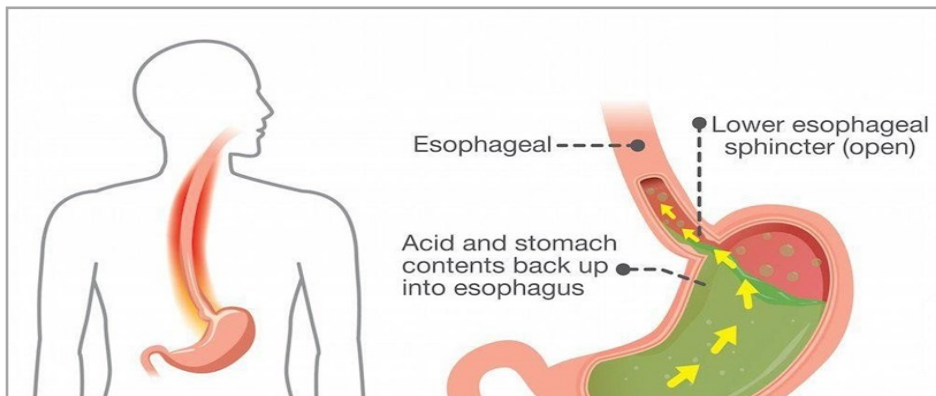
What is acid reflux?

Stomach juices are made up of strong digestive acids in order to break down our food, and bile from the gall bladder. The stomach lining is designed to cope with these juices but sometimes they 'leak' out and travel upwards into the esophagus (the tube connecting the throat to the stomach). Here they can cause irritation, resulting in symptoms such as indigestion or heartburn.

In some people, small amounts of stomach acid can 'reflux' back into the voice box (larynx), causing irritation and hoarseness. This is also known as laryngopharyngeal reflux ('LPR'). It may also be referred to as 'silent reflux' because many people do not experience any of the classic symptoms of heartburn or indigestion.

What are the symptoms?

- Hoarseness or weakness of voice.
- Tickly cough.
- Too much mucous or phlegm in the throat.
- Sensitivity to hot and cold liquids.
- Nasty taste in your mouth.
- Difficulty swallowing dry flaky foods and/or tablets.
- Throat clearing.
- Feeling something is stuck in your throat.
- Choking at night.



What can I do to help?

There are many things you can do to help reduce the risk, frequency and/or severity of attacks of acid reflux. Please see the next page:

Eating and drinking

- Eat smaller, frequent meals, rather than starving yourself and then eating a big meal.
- Eat less in the evening and leave at least two hours between eating and going to bed.
- Avoid eating 'on the run'.
- Sit upright when eating; don't sit in a chair with a tray on your lap.
- Try to remain upright for at least one hour after eating. Avoid slumping or bending over after eating.
- Avoid exercising immediately after a meal.
- Drink plenty of water.

Food and drinks to avoid

- Hot, spicy food.
- Tomato-based foods.
- Onions.
- Fried, fatty or greasy foods, or anything with vinegar.
- Very salty, crispy or crumbly food – this may increase irritation already caused by reflux.
- Chocolate.
- Citrus fruits and juices.
- Coffee and tea (both caffeinated and decaffeinated).
- Fizzy drinks.
- Alcohol.

Lifestyle

- Avoid wearing tight clothing around your middle.
- Avoid stressful situations if you can and do things to help you to relax, such as relaxation classes, yoga or swimming.
- If you smoke, give up. For information on giving up smoking, please call the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0300 123 1044 or speak to your GP.
- Raise the head end of your bed 10-25 cm high by putting blocks underneath. Just using more pillows will not do the trick.
- If you are overweight, ask your doctor for help and advice about losing weight.

Medication

Take an antacid (e.g. Gaviscon Advance) four times a day after meals and before bedtime. Have nothing to eat or drink for one hour after taking it. Please note: always consult with your GP or pharmacist before starting new medication.

Useful Telephone Numbers

- Switchboard, Lister Hospital
☎ 01438 314333 - ask for ENT Department
- ENT Nurse Specialist (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)
☎ Mobile: 0778 534 3359 or 0787 639 0290

In an emergency, dial 999 and request an ambulance or attend your nearest Emergency Department.

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ☎ 111

Useful websites:

www.entuk.org

www.nhs.uk

www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk/conditions/heartburn-and-acid-reflux

www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk

You can request this information in a different format or another language.

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