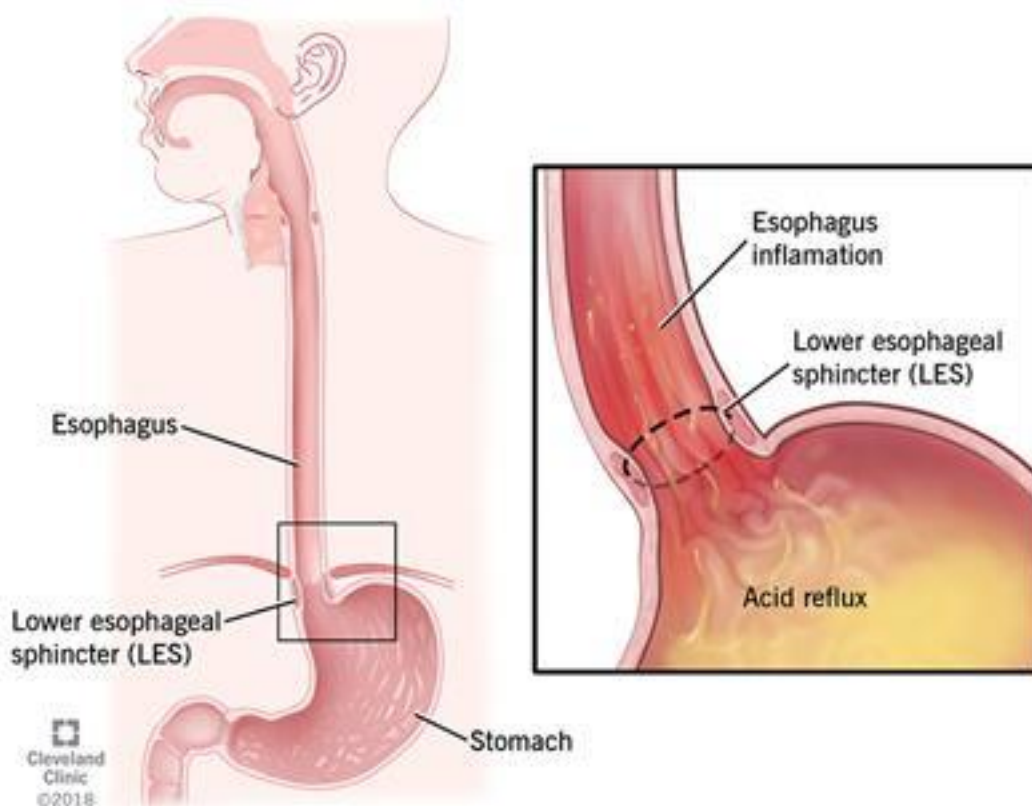


Diet to Control Heartburn

What is heartburn?

Heartburn is when the acid in your stomach comes back up into the esophagus causing a “burning” feeling in your chest. Heartburn is a symptom of acid reflux (GERD, gastroesophageal reflux disease). Symptoms of heartburn include chest pain, burning in the throat, difficulty swallowing, the feeling of food sticking in the throat and a burning feeling in the chest.



The esophagus (the tube that connects your mouth to the stomach) has a tight band of muscles at the lower end (lower esophageal sphincter (LES)) that closes after the food enters the stomach and prevents the stomach contents to reenter the esophagus. If this sphincter weakens or relaxes at

the wrong time, stomach acid can back up into the esophagus, causing heartburn and its complications.

Most people get heartburn after meals, but can also awaken people while they are sleeping. People may also experience heartburn after eating specific foods or drinking certain beverages. Pregnancy tends to aggravate heartburn.

What foods and drinks cause heartburn?

The types of foods that may trigger your heartburn can vary a lot from what may trigger symptoms in someone else. Try keeping a food journal to track what you eat and drink, the amounts, the time you ate, and any symptoms that follow.

If you have symptoms of heartburn, avoiding certain foods can help decrease the burning that you feel. Listed below are foods that may cause discomfort and should be avoided.

- **Alcohol**
- **Spices**, especially chili, cayenne and black pepper
- **Spicy foods** like hot sauce, salsa, curry, red chili paste, wasabi, horseradish, jalapeno, sriracha
- **Peppermint**
- **Chocolate**
- **Onions and garlic**
- **Acidic foods** such as citrus (lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit)
- **Tomatoes and tomato products** (tomato juice, pasta sauce, soup, paste, etc.)
- **Deep fried foods** (such as French fries, potato chips), **high fat desserts and baked goods** (such as cookies, cakes and muffins), and **fatty foods** (such as high fat meat and dairy products)
- **Caffeine** products such as coffee, tea, energy drinks or cola drinks
- **Carbonated beverages**

Diet and lifestyle tips to prevent heartburn:

- ✓ Quit smoking
- ✓ Avoid lying down for at least 45 – 60 minutes after eating
- ✓ Avoid eating 2-3 hours before bedtime
- ✓ Elevate the head of the bed 6 to 8 inches when sleeping if you are experiencing heartburn at night. Try “bed blocks” or special foam wedges
- ✓ Sleep on your left side
- ✓ Wear clothing that is not tight across your waist
- ✓ Limit or avoid alcoholic beverages
- ✓ Limit drinks with caffeine such as coffee, tea, energy drinks and cola drinks
- ✓ Limit orange juice or other acidic fruits/drinks
- ✓ Limit deep fried foods and baked goods
- ✓ Snack on foods such as vegetables and fruit, and lower fat whole grain crackers
- ✓ Eat smaller and lower fat meals
- ✓ Limit the fat you use at the table and in cooking, such as margarine, butter, oil, salad dressing, to 2 to 3 Tbsp. each day
- ✓ Choose lower fat dairy products such as skim or 1% milk and yogurt and lower fat cheese (less than 20% M.F.)
- ✓ Remove all visible fat from meat and skin from poultry before cooking. Use lean ground beef and pork and drain off the fat after browning. Choose plant-based, low fat alternatives like lentils, chickpeas and tofu often
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight, especially around the waist, is a risk factor for reflux. Losing weight may help with your symptoms
- ✓ Include regular physical activity

What if diet and lifestyle changes don't help my heartburn?

In most cases you will not need to see a health-care professional, except if the symptoms are frequent (more than three times a week), severe or increasing in severity. Speak with your health care provider if diet and lifestyle changes and/or over the counter antacids do not help or if you experience vomiting, fatigue and unintentional weight loss.

Sources:

- UnlockFood.ca: managing Your Heartburn
- Dietitians of Canada, PEN resource: Eating Guidelines for Managing Reflux
- Medicinenet.com: How to Get Rid of Heartburn

Registered Dietitian: _____

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