

Managing Heartburn

Why This Diet Is Important

Heartburn is caused by a back-up of stomach acid into the esophagus. When stomach acid comes into contact with the walls of the esophagus it often causes a "burning" feeling. Certain foods and lifestyle choices can increase the back-up of stomach acid, making symptoms worse. If you have symptoms of heartburn, avoiding certain foods can help decrease the burning you feel. Making lifestyle changes can also help. Consult your Doctor immediately if diet and lifestyle changes do not help, or if you experience vomiting, anemia, unplanned weight loss, chest pain or shortness of breath.



Steps you can take

- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Stop smoking.
- Limit or avoid beverages that contain alcohol.
- Limit or avoid drinks with caffeine such as coffee, tea or cola drinks.
- Remain sitting upright during meals and for 45 to 60 minutes after eating.
- Avoid eating two to three hours before bedtime.
- Avoid eating large amounts of food at one time.
- Raise the head of your bed six to eight inches when sleeping. Try "bed blocks", special foam wedges or a hospital bed. Pillows may not be adequate as they raise only your head. Your esophagus should be higher than your stomach.
- Avoid clothing that is tight across your stomach.
- Limit or avoid foods that may trigger symptoms such as spices, peppermint, chocolate, citrus juices, onions, garlic and tomato

products.

Foods That May Cause Discomfort:

The types of foods that bother people with heartburn can vary a lot. Eat a variety of foods and take note of which foods cause you discomfort. When your symptoms have settled, you may try re-introducing these foods into your diet in small amounts and as part of a meal.

You may find that eating high fat foods cause you discomfort. Some people with heartburn report an increase in symptoms following a high fat meal. Choosing lower fat food choices is also part of healthy eating and can help with weight reduction.

- Do not try to cut out all fat from your diet. Limit the fat you use at the table and in cooking to 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 Tbsp) each day. For more information on different kinds of fats and how to include healthier fats in your diet.
- Choose lower fat dairy products like 1% and skim milk and yogurt, lower fat cheese (less than 20% milk fat) and low fat sour cream.
- Eat lean meats and poultry (remove skin). Choose lower fat alternatives like lentils, chickpeas and tofu often.
- Limit amounts of high fat desserts and snacks like cookies, commercial baked goods and chocolate.

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