

Gastroesophageal reflux (Heartburn)

The stomach produces a very strong acid. It doesn't cause any damage because the stomach walls are strong enough to store that acid.

When the acid rises up from the stomach to the esophagus it may cause a burning sensation because the walls of the esophagus are more sensitive. This is what is known as "gastroesophageal reflux". Here are a few general tips that are easy to follow and that will help to reduce the symptoms.

Positioning:

- Wait for 2-3 hours after dinner before going to bed or lying down. You can drink water during this period but it is recommended that you don't drink hot fluids nor eat fatty foods.



- Avoid bending over and going to bed right after a meal (taking a nap, etc.).

- Raise the head of your bed about 15 cms (6") (you can put wooden blocks under the bed posts).

Eating habits:

- Eat several small meals (about 5) a day.
- Some foods and beverages make heartburn worse. Avoid fats (for example, in red meat, processed meats, fried foods, pastries and dairy products that are not fat-free). Chocolate, chili peppers, lemons and sour oranges can also increase heartburn as do coffee, tea, mint, alcohol, colas and carbonated beverages
- Vegetables, potatoes and seasonal fruit are recommended.

Other things that may help:

- If you are overweight, lose some weight to reduce the pressure on your stomach. Wearing loose-fitting clothes (including your belt) is also helpful.



- Smoking makes heartburn worse so it is better to stop smoking.
- Some medications (such as aspirin, anti-inflammatory drugs, some hormones, sleeping pills, etc.) can also cause reflux. If you are taking any, you should talk to your doctor as it may be advisable to change to another.