

Holistically Healing Heartburn

Millions of people suffer from the symptoms of heartburn every day. Those with acute cases of heartburn may have a condition called acid reflux or GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease).

Any form of heartburn is an unpleasant experience, to say the least. The splashing up of stomach acid into the esophagus and throat can be quite painful and potentially dangerous. In extreme cases, where the esophagus is continually damaged by the reflux of stomach fluids, a condition called Barrett's Esophagus can develop. This condition is a precursor to esophageal cancer.

Barrett's Esophagus occurs when chronic acid reflux or esophagitis is not controlled. Through constant inflammation and damage, the normal cells that line the esophagus called squamous cells turn into specialized columnar cells. Columnar cells are not normally found in human beings and can become cancerous.

The physical cause of heartburn is the improper functioning of the LES (lower esophageal sphincter). This ringed muscle at the bottom of the esophagus, relaxes in order to allow food to enter the stomach. This muscle then retracts in order to keep the digestive fluids where they belong. It is when this muscle is too relaxed or damaged, that the stomach fluids can escape up into the esophagus thereby causing acid reflux.

There are many possible causes of acid reflux. The foods that we eat play an important role. Food that is too acidic can aggravate this ailment. Not chewing food properly, eating meals that are too large and lying down within three hours of eating can all contribute to acid reflux.

Certain foods and beverages can cause the LES to become lazy. These culprits include smoking, drinking alcohol and prescription drugs. Raw onions and garlic, fried foods, chocolate and foods that are too spicy can also cause the LES to relax.

There are two ways to treat this condition. They are the allopathic medical and the holistic approaches to disease. The allopathic medical way is to prescribe certain drugs such as H₂ receptor antagonists, which include Tagamet and Zantac, or PPI drugs (proton pump inhibitors) like Nexium and Prilosec. These medicines slow down the production of stomach acid and are the two main types of pharmaceutical acid suppressors.

This pharmaceutical approach is dangerous in that it impedes the proper digestion and assimilation of food. There are also numerous harmful side effects associated with these drugs. Drugs only treat the symptoms of a disease or

condition. They are not intended to cure. If the drug companies created drugs that cured they would soon go out of business.

The alternative way to treat acid reflux is holistically. Holistic by definition means considering a whole thing or being to be more than a collection of parts; Treating the whole person rather than just the Symptoms of a disease.

Using alternative remedies, which are natural and have no side effects, is certainly the safest and most effective approach. These treatments are also far less expensive than drugs. Holistic treatment, unlike drugs, can actually cure the condition or disease.

In order to develop acid reflux, we must first have an acidic system. By treating the whole body, acid reflux will disappear. What we eat and drink determines the PH of the body.

Vegetable juices, like raw potato, celery and cabbage are very alkaline in nature and are helpful in correcting an acidic stomach. Papaya juice contains the digestive enzyme papain, which has a soothing effect on the stomach and aids in the breaking down of protein.

Slippery Elm, bladderwrack and marshmallow, belong to a category of herbs called demulcents. These herbs aid digestion by decreasing inflammation and by soothing the affected areas. They form a protective barrier against stomach acid and other digestive irritants.

There are many holistic ways to cure acid reflux. Meditation can be of great help. Start by doing deep breathing exercises for ten minutes. Keeping the eyes closed, visualize you stomach, LES, esophagus and throat as young, pink, tender and perfect. Continue to breath and picture yourself in perfect glowing health. See yourself eating slowly in a relaxed atmosphere, enjoying your food. Picture the food being digested and assimilated in a perfect manner. Feel all the parts of your body working in perfect harmony together.

Yoga can also be very beneficial to the body as a whole. Loosing weight and regular exercise are important as well. Drinking copious amount of pure water not only flushes the system of toxins, but dilutes stomach acid during periods between meals.

The holistic approach to healing is the medicine of the future. We can all be a part of that future now.

For more information on how to heal acid reflux the natural way, go to: <A
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