

## **The Acid Reflux Blues –An Easy Antidote!**

The real antidote to acid reflux, gerd, heartburn and indigestion has to do with what we eat, how we eat, where we eat and when we eat. This may sound a little too simple, but it is not. Everyone is different; therefore people have to approach eating in different ways.

There are many foods and beverages which trigger heartburn. Not all of these affect everyone in the same manner. For instance, I have difficulty digesting raw bell peppers, but I know others who cannot eat raw tomatoes, but have no trouble with raw bell peppers. Ironically, I can eat fresh raw tomatoes all day long and not have gerd. So anyone who makes blanket statements regarding this subject has got it all wrong.

Through trial and error, we all discover what we can and cannot digest with ease. There are, however, some foods that cause problems for anyone who is susceptible to acid reflux. Any food or drink that causes the LES (lower esophageal sphincter) to relax should be consumed in strict moderation. The LES is a ring of fibrous muscle which separates the esophagus and the stomach. When this muscle relaxes, acid and pepsin can splash up from the stomach into the esophagus and throat, thereby causing acid reflux.

The hydrochloric acid in the stomach is very powerful. It has been compared to the acid in a car battery, but it is a necessary part of our physical anatomy. It constitutes the initial stage of the digestive process. It not only breaks down the food we eat but keeps potentially dangerous bacteria which live in the digestive tract in check. This is the reason that drugs which stop the acid pumps from functioning are potentially dangerous. These drugs are called proton pump inhibitors (PPI drugs). They interfere with the digestion and assimilation of food and allow the overgrowth of bacteria.

Eating jagged foods like crackers or corn chips can cause little lacerations to develop in the esophagus and LES. Then later consuming acidic foods like spicy over cooked tomato sauce can exacerbate the problem. This scenario is typical of why many people have acid reflux to begin with. It can easily be avoided.

Foods and beverages, like chocolate, caffeine, fried foods, tomato products and alcohol, can cause the LES to relax and should be avoided until the esophagus has had time to heal.

How and where we eat is very important, as well. Chewing food properly is essential to correct digestion. Saliva in the mouth is actually very alkaline in nature. It acts as sort of a lubricant to assist the teeth in grinding food to a fine pulp, making it easier to digest. When I was a little boy, I had an elementary school teacher who constantly reminded me to chew my food twenty-two times before swallowing. She said that if I didn't I would have indigestion. At the time, I thought she was crazy, but she was right on the money.

Eating slowly in a relaxed atmosphere is also crucial to good digestion. When we eat too fast we don't chew properly forcing crude clumps of food into a shocked and traumatized stomach. This is certainly a perfect way to insure a good case of indigestion. People who grab meals on the run are the worst offenders and I think you will find many of them at fast food restaurants. Unfortunately, they are teaching their children to do the same.

Finally, there is the important consideration of when you eat. It's a proven fact that eating several small meals, spaced throughout the day, is far healthier for the digestive system than the traditional "three big meals". Eating too much at one time is one of the biggest causes of acid reflux and also contributes to unwanted weight gain.

Last but not least, I must mention the most relevant antidote to the acid reflux condition; never go to bed with a full stomach. If we want to avoid acid reflux, we must allow at least two hours after eating before lying down. Three hours would be even better. This, of course, means that a late night bowl of ice cream in bed would be strictly taboo.

So you see, the real antidote to the acid reflux blues is not so much about "what to do", but about "what not to do". It is not about drugs, surgery or even doctors. The natural cure for acid reflux is all about common sense.

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