

Acid Reflux and the “Type A” Personality

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Stress is one of the most common contributors to acid reflux. Of all the personality types, the type A personality is the most plagued by stress.

Contrary to common opinion these people are not always men. Many women have this type of personality, as well. They are extremely competitive, work obsessed, impatient, picky and even sometimes hostile. They simply do not know how to relax. They are often so time oriented and in such a rush that punctuality becomes an obsession. I have known both men and women of this type who threw fits when someone was a few minutes late for an appointment.

Often because of the pressure at work to produce, stress levels run very high. Failure of any kind which threatens the goals, self image or ego of this type personality can cause certain hormones like adrenalin and cortisol to be released. This causes the heart rate to speed up, breathing to become rapid and the digestive system to come to a screeching halt.

The constant stress experienced by these personality types often leads to medical problems such as heart disease, hypertension and, yes, acid reflux. When stress causes hormone levels to rise, this is called the “fight or flight” response. The digestion of food requires a tremendous amount of energy. In order for the body to deal with perceived emergencies, it conserves this energy by shutting down the digestive system. The stomach is made to operate on less oxygen, which leads to poor digestion and a build up of excess acid. This, of course, causes acid reflux.

The type A person often smokes and drinks too much coffee and alcohol in order to find relief from stress and worry. They often eat comfort food and fast food that contain a tremendous amount of fat which exacerbates indigestion.

Since it is difficult to change a personality type, one has to learn how to deal with stress so that it can cause less physical harm. Learning to relax is essential to this effort.

Whether you are an A type personality who suffers from chronic acid reflux caused by stress, or you are just someone who experiences occasional acid reflux brought on by bouts of stress, consider the following:

- Exercise your way to peace of mind. Everyone knows that exercise is essential for good health. Besides the physical benefits it is also an important way to relieve stress. Who has time to think about problems when you're about to win a tennis match! The endorphins produced in your brain while exercising create an opiate-like "good feeling" sensation that can take you far away from the cares of the day. It is important to find a way to make exercise fun, whether it be jogging with your dog or playing ball with your friends.
- Take the pressure off yourself - Lining up too many goals to be accomplished in too

short a period of time can be very stressful. Do one thing at a time. Learn to relax and learn to say no when others become too demanding. Set your priorities straight and make lists that you can stick to. Go easy on yourself.

- Take your mind off of you - "Loosing your mind" is not the worst thing you can do. Meditation, Tai Chi, Hatha Yoga, Chi Gong and self-hypnotism are all great ways to relieve stress. Focusing on a demanding activity will take your mind off what is causing the stress. Not thinking about yourself can be very beneficial. These arts can also be applied to enhance life with positive improvement.
- "Let it be" - You cannot control everything in life. There will always be planes that are late arrivals or departures. The weather may not cooperate with that family picnic that you planned. Your mother-in-law may show up when least expected and there will always be taxes to pay. It is important to learn to roll with the punches. You can always find something good in an otherwise bad situation, but most importantly don't let it stress you out.
- Maintain an optimistic attitude - Never underestimate the power of positive thinking. Focus on the good things - not the bad things. Be excited about the future and believe that only good is in store for you. Better than projecting the future, concentrate on the present and demonstrate gratitude in the moment. Being optimistic not only affects others in a positive way, it gives you the balance that you need to be stress free.
- Have a good laugh! - Laughter is the great healer. A good laugh can relieve more stress than anything else. Watch a funny movie, go to a comedy club or go see Hunter Blue perform at Mimi's piano bar in New York City. Try to associate with people who make you laugh, or at least don't make you frown. Maintain a good sense of humor at all times. Stress cannot exist where there is laughter.
- Love a dog or a cat - Pet animals are a sure cure for stress. Their pure unaffected love and funny antics can blow that stress away. If you can't muster the obligation of responsibility for a pet, borrow someone else's pet or volunteer to be a care taker when they are out of town. Pets have a tranquilizing affect on us and their power to diminish stress should not be overlooked.
- Talk to a friend - It's very therapeutic when a trusted friend gives advice and thoughtful support. We all need objective guidance at times. Sympathy from friends and relatives has a calming affect and can reduce stress. It's almost as if you are not bearing your problems alone anymore and that kind of encouragement is invaluable.
- Get a massage - There is nothing quite as stress relieving as a good massage. I find that going for acupuncture is very relaxing as well. If you can't manage a massage, indulge in a long hot bath, whirlpool or steam shower.

The A type personality is naturally prone to stress and, therefore, acid reflux. Thankfully the reduction of stress is not rocket science and is quite easily accomplished. By reducing

the stress in our lives, we can minimize the effect of the acid reflux condition. Of course there are other factors involved with acid reflux, but stress is certainly one of the big ones. For the A type personality, this should be dealt with in a serious manner. Relax!

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