

Provincial Voice Care Resource Program

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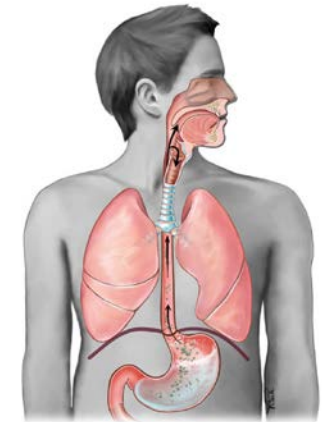
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A video is available on our website: “But Doctor”.

Throat Problems & Gastro Esophageal Reflux



What is Reflux?

Stomach contents are generally kept in the stomach by a valve at the lower end of the esophagus. Reflux is the term used when stomach acids come back up into the esophagus or throat, and cause direct acid irritation, or reflex tightening of the throat muscles.

Heartburn may not be present when the throat is affected.

Treatment is directed at keeping the stomach contents where they belong and reducing acid when reflux is likely to occur.

Symptoms of Reflux

The sense of a lump in the throat, called globus, may be due to increased tension in the upper esophageal opening behind the voice box. This leads to increase in secretions in the throat and throat clearing, which may be mistaken as postnasal drip or “phlegm”. Night time reflux will cause a sore, irritated throat and a gravelly voice. Muscle tension in the larynx may lead to vocal difficulty, trouble swallowing, and in severe cases, to choking spells and airway obstruction.

How to Manage Reflux

- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
 - Do not wear clothing that is tight around the waist.
 - Remain upright during meals and for 45-60 minutes after eating.
 - Raise the head of your bed 4-6 inches, and do not eat 2-3 hours prior to going to bed.
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- Limit beverages that contain alcohol and caffeine.
- Limit foods that may trigger symptoms such as spices, peppermint, chocolate, citrus juices, onions, garlic and tomato products.
- Limit the fat you use at the table and in cooking to 30 to 45 ml (2 to 3 Tbsp) each day. 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 such as cookies, commercial baked goods and chocolate.
- Continue to eat a variety of foods from all food groups. Avoid eating large amounts of food at one time.

Antacids

Antacids may be used to neutralize stomach acids and can be taken half an hour after each meal and at bedtime. Examples include TUMS, Maalox, Mylanta and Gaviscon. Acid production can be blocked by medications, some of which can be purchased over the counter without a prescription (e.g. Pepcid, Zantac).

Prescription Medication

The most commonly used prescription drugs for reflux throat problems are called **proton pump inhibitors** (PPIs), which stop the stomach from producing acid. They are usually taken first thing in the morning. They may need to be taken daily for up to 3 months for full effect to be gained. Sometimes PPIs will be prescribed twice daily to achieve full, 24 hour control.

Other types of medication may be suggested by your doctor.