



At AIM, we use proven natural methods to help you get rid of heartburn, allowing you to finally become friends with your stomach.

Try out the suggestions in these articles, but if you are still having problems with Acid Reflux, you should give us a call.

AIM for health!

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Don't Lose Heart: You CAN prevent heartburn and acid reflux

Nearly 15% of all adults use antacids regularly to combat acid reflux and indigestion. GERD, or acid reflux, occurs when the **lower esophageal sphincter (LES)** (valve separating the esophagus and stomach) does not close properly, allowing acid to back up into the esophagus. The lining of the esophagus is not made for the strong enzymes and acids released in the stomach for the digestion of food. When this reflux occurs chronically, it leads to inflammation and thickening of the esophageal wall. The cellular changes that occur make swallowing difficult and lead to serious complications such as Barrett's esophagus and cancer.

GERD is best dealt with by altering habits, diet and lifestyle as a first line of action. In order to get motivated to make the right changes- it is helpful to get down to the essence of what is going on in the body.

The two prominent factors in the condition of GERD are weak muscle tone of the LES, and stomach acid.

Weak muscle tone of the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) allows gastric contents to back up into the esophagus.

Causes include:

Large Meals- The stomach is like an elastic bag. When it gets full and stretched to capacity, the opening at the top is strained and can pull open.

Laying Down after Eating- Lying down after eating creates a flow of food backwards or rather up into the esophagus.

Belly Fat- Fat around the belly creates more intra-abdominal pressure, pushing the stomach and its contents up.

Medications- Medications can contribute by relaxing the LES; as is the case with sedatives, some antidepressants, anti-nausea meds, estrogen replacements, and bronchodilators. They may also directly irritate the stomach lining, as with NSAID's, Fosamax, Iron, Potassium supplements and some antibiotics.

Poor digestion- A recent study found that heartburn and acid reflux are actually most often caused by inadequate production of stomach acids and digestive enzymes. *In fact, most GERD is ultimately due to a lack of acid and not too much.* When food collects in the stomach and is not digested efficiently, it becomes rancid and forms gasses, which put pressure on the sphincter and cause reflux. A quick way to see if you are in this category is to drink water with lemon juice or apple cider vinegar in it before meals and see if you experience less heartburn overall. Vinegar and lemon juice both help break down fats and proteins, thereby aiding digestion.

Increase in stomach acid causes burning pain and reflux.

Causes include:

Consuming acid producing foods- The top foods that aggravate heartburn include; citrus, tomatoes, garlic and onion, rich, fatty, spicy or fried foods, alcohol, caffeine and fruit juices.

Eating quickly- Eating too fast can wreak havoc on digestion. Salivation and chewing are two extremely important steps in the digestive process, which can be skipped over to a large extent when we eat quickly. Large boluses of food, which could have been broken down with the teeth and saliva, make the stomach work harder, mechanically and by pumping out more acids and enzymes.

Food sensitivities- When we pinpoint certain foods that are a challenge for us to digest fully and cause symptoms of discomfort and pain we refer to it as food sensitivity. Eating foods which we don't digest well causes an increase in stomach acids to deal with it and can increase inflammation in the GI tract.

Stress- Stress releases many hormones into our bodies which inhibits proper digestion and increases inflammation in the body.

Another side to the story...

Helicobacter Pylori

In 1980's an Australian physician name Dr. Barry Marahall did some pioneering work on acid reflux and discovered that an organism called *Helicobacter pylori* causes a chronic low level inflammation of the stomach lining and is the leading cause of producing many of the symptoms of acid reflux. Over the past 20 years there have been tens of thousands of research articles supporting this fact. If we hold this to be true, then suppressing stomach acid will not treat the problem, and will only treat the symptom. The reason is when you suppress the amount of acid in your stomach by using an antacid, you decrease your body's ability to kill the helicobacter bacteria. So it actually makes your condition worse and perpetuates the problem.

H. pylori is a spiral bacterium that glues itself to the mucosal layer of the stomach. If symptoms of GERD have been hanging around for a long time or don't get better with concerted diet and lifestyle adjustments, then *H. Pylori* should be suspected and tested for. 90% of stomach ulcers have been found to be caused by this insidious infection. Ridding the body of this bacterium involves using a cocktail of antibiotics for an extended course of treatment, usually 3-6 months, **plus**, managing diet and using food and herbs as medicine in the year following the pharmaceutical intervention.

GERD has many faces and can be caused by many physiological and pathological conditions. In most cases, lowering the acid content of the stomach by using an antacid is not beneficial in the long run. Your symptoms should be evaluated and treated with the goal of getting to the root, and not just managed by providing symptom relief alone.

Classic Food Cures for Gastritis

Baking Soda and Water- ½ - 1 tsp in fresh water to neutralize stomach acid on the spot.

Cabbage- Contains many nutrients that heal mucosal lining of the stomach and regulate acid production. Can be juiced or cooked.

Aloe Juice- 4-6 oz per serving. It is cooling and decreases inflammation and irritation of the stomach lining. Be careful, as too much can cause loose stools.

Licorice- Increases mucous secretion at the stomach lining to protect it from excess acid, improves circulation to the stomach and can kill H. Pylori.

RHIZINATE

Rhizinate is our featured product of the month. Rhizinate is made from deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL) and is used to help reduce the effects of acid reflux, or GERD. DGL has been shown to be most effective when mixed with saliva, thus Rhizinate is a chewable product, to enhance its potency.

The stomach maintains an acidic pH that helps to initiate digestion and promote microbial defense, yet its epithelial tissues must simultaneously be shielded against harsh acidic conditions. This protection in the stomach is created by a mucous barrier that maintains stomach health and comfort.

Licorice compounds found in DGL have been shown to support the local concentration of prostaglandins that promote mucous secretion and cell proliferation in the stomach. Rhizinate helps to support and maintain a healthy mucosal lining in the esophagus and stomach with new cells, enhanced blood supply, and protective mucous production. These effects help to reduce the effects of imbalances in the acidic profile of the stomach and upper gastrointestinal lining. If you experience occasional discomfort after consuming coffee, spicy or fried foods, come in and try Rhizinate to see if it works for you!

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