

Acid Reflux - Symptoms and Treatment

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by John Smith

Acid reflux (also known as GERD or heartburn) is a common condition -- Over 60 million Americans experience it at least once a month.

For some, acid reflux is a temporary phenomenon experienced only when eating too much, or eating particular types of food e.g. spicy foods. But for many others, acid reflux can be a painful and persistent condition.

What Is Acid Reflux?

Acid reflux occurs when the lower oesophageal sphincter (that normally closes after swallowing to prevent stomach contents from escaping) malfunctions and allows stomach acid to travel up the oesophagus. When this occurs, a painful sensation is felt.

What are the Symptoms of Acid Reflux?

The symptoms of acid reflux are a painful "burning" sensation in the upper chest and/or regurgitation of acid into the mouth. Some patients will even develop nausea although this is less common. Although often called "heartburn", the pain should not be mistaken for that associated with a true heart attack or cardiac arrest which would be accompanied by tightness of and pounding in the chest, weakness and feeling faint.

What are the Treatments for Acid Reflux?

Fortunately there are many treatments available for acid reflux.

Antacids are usually the first port of call for many acid reflux sufferers. For short term and infrequent attacks of acid reflux, these provide much needed temporary relief. However, as a long term solution they are not suitable and alternatives should be sought.

Any sufferer of regular acid reflux should keep a diary of everything they eat and drink. Over time, patterns can be established and many people report elimination or reduction of acid reflux symptoms after changing their diet accordingly to eliminate problematic food or drink.

If dietary changes have little or no effect, there are various families of drugs that are available over the counter and on prescription.

PPIs, or proton pump inhibitors, are often prescribed and successful drugs. These work by inhibiting production of the stomach acid that causes acid reflux. They have relatively limited side effects. H2 blockers are a different family of drugs that have the same effect but work in a different way. For the vast majority of long term acid reflux sufferers, PPIs and H2 blockers are a successful drug therapy. Some people, however, fail to respond to treatment with PPIs and H2 blockers and their only option are more radical drugs known as promotility agents. Unfortunately, these can have very severe side effects and are therefore rarely prescribed.

Lastly, for those who fail to respond to drug treatment, or simply want an alternative to the daily inconvenience of taking drugs, surgery is an option. New techniques are constantly being developed, some of which include procedures such as Enteryx Procedure, Stretta Procedure, Nissen Fundoplication and Endocinch. Your doctor will be able to give you more advice on these surgery options.

About the Author

For more information and in-depth analysis of the treatment of acid reflux, visit [Acid Reflux Treatment](#)