

## REFLUX INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

The doctor thinks you may have “Reflux Disease” which is also called “Gastroesophageal Reflux of GERD”. Reflux happens when the contents of your stomach now “backwards” up your esophagus toward your mouth. The results can be hoarseness, heartburn, a sore throat, a bad taste in your mouth and even sinusitis. A chronic irritation of your tissues of the esophagus from reflux can be dangerous.

- **When you eat matters.** The closer to bedtime you eat, the more likely you will have reflux. Avoid eating for three to four hours before bedtime.
- **What you eat matters.** Foods which are high in fat may increase the chances of reflux because they slow the rate at which your stomach empties. Spicy foods seem to cause reflux more often in some people. Therefore, a diet rich in complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables may be best. Avoid alcohol, since alcohol seems to weaken the muscle in the esophagus which helps to keep stomach contents in the stomach. Avoid caffeine, chocolate, chewing gum and cough drops, all which can make reflux worse.
- **How much you eat matters.** Meals with greater volume take longer to digest and are more likely to cause reflux.
- **How much you weigh matters.** Many people find that loss of a few pounds under medical supervision eliminates reflux completely. Also, tighter clothing and a bigger belly both increase abdominal pressure, and thereby increase reflux.
- **Sleeping habits matter.** Some people find that their waterbeds make reflux worse. Many people find that elevating the head of a bed about five inches with cinder blocks helps reflux. Unfortunately, elevation of the head with pillows doesn’t seem to work.
- **Antacids can help.** If you don’t have kidney disease or other problems which make antacids unsafe, it often helps to take one to two tablespoons of an antacid before bed. One good antacid is Gavascon, which helps to coat your esophagus if reflux occurs. Ask your doctor about the wisdom of antacids for you.
- **Medicines can help.** The doctor has prescribed one or more medications for you to take. Take them carefully. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about them and how to use them.

And finally . . . .Don’t be satisfied with being sick. If your symptoms aren’t improving, Tell a doctor. Maybe there are other treatments or tests which are appropriate for you.

## **Tips To Help Reduce Reflux**

It may not be possible to make reflux disease disappear entirely, but there are simple, effective ways to reduce its frequency and severity. They involve relatively minor changes. Along with antacids, they will provide adequate relief for about half of the people who suffer from reflux.

There's help for those reflux sufferers who are not relieved by lifestyle changes alone. It's medical help, and it begins with a visit to the doctor for medical diagnosis and a treatment program. If you're experiencing frequent heartburn, indigestion, or stomach pain, you may have a more serious medical problem-or one that could become serious if left untreated.

Your doctor will evaluate your condition and decide on a treatment plan that's right for you. That plan may include lifestyle modifications and/or medication to help relieve the symptoms of acid reflux disease. Whatever your doctor advises, it's important to follow every part of the treatment plan and to continue it as long as directed.

## **AVOID**

1. Avoid certain foods that are spicy, acidic, tomato-based, or fatty such as sausages, chocolate, tomatoes, and citrus fruits.
2. Avoid alcohol, tea, colas, and coffee, even decaffeinated.
3. Eat moderate amounts of food to avoid overfilling you stomach.
4. Stop, or at least cut back on smoking.
5. Don't try to exercise immediately after eating.
6. Wait at least 3 to 4 hours after eating before lying down.
7. Elevate the head of your bed by 6 inches or use extra pillows to raise the level of your head above your feet.
8. Avoid tight belts and other restrictive clothing.
9. Talk to your doctor about drugs that may decrease LES pressure.
10. Lose weight (if overweight weight loss appears to help alleviate GERD symptoms).
11. Consult your doctor if your reflux symptoms persist.