

Patient Information

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Dietary and lifestyle advice for the management of heartburn

This leaflet provides information for people with hiatus hernia, oesophagitis or heartburn.

Introduction

Heartburn (also called indigestion / gastro-oesophageal reflux / dyspepsia) includes symptoms of discomfort, burning or pain in the upper abdomen (middle of your chest) and can be associated with belching, nausea or a sense of bloated fullness.

Heartburn occurs when food and the acid contents of the stomach pass back into the food pipe (oesophagus). Some lifestyle factors affect the muscles which usually stop food from travelling back into the food pipe, and can cause the stomach to empty more slowly.

These are only guidelines. Individuals may find that different strategies reduce their symptoms depending on their cause.

Measures that may help:

- Take all anti-reflux medicines as prescribed by your doctor. You can also ask your pharmacist about over-the-counter medications.
- Try eating small, frequent meals, rather than large meals.
- Take your time at mealtimes and chew well.
- Avoid eating main meals too close to bedtime or just before lying down.



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- Drink before or after meals rather than during to prevent the stomach overfilling.
- Help prevent constipation by including high fibre foods in your diet and aim for 8-10 cups (1.5 - 2 litres) of fluid per day. For further advice on fibre please refer to the booklet “How to eat more fibre”.
- Try to maintain a healthy weight for your height or lose weight if you are overweight. Consider stopping smoking
- Consider reducing your alcohol intake. Men and women should not exceed 14 units of alcohol a week.
- Avoid large amounts of fried or fatty foods, citrus/acidic foods, caffeinated drinks, carbonated drinks and highly spiced foods **only if** they make your symptoms worse. Try reintroducing them after a month or so to see if they still cause symptoms.

For further information:

Guts UK

<https://gutscharity.org.uk/>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact the department on 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

Document History

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