

Head and Neck Cancer Speech and Language Therapy Team

Voice advice Sheet: Reflux

Your food pipe has two sphincters (bands of muscles) to stop the backward flow of stomach contents and digestive acids, back up the food pipe and into the throat.

Gastro-oesophageal reflux:

An excessive amount (of reflux) of stomach acid passes up through the lower band of muscles and into the food pipe.

Laryngo- pharyngeal reflux:

- Stomach contents and acid passes all the way through both lower and upper sphincter and into the back of the throat
- Can irritate the tissues in the throat

Measures that may reduce your reflux

- Discuss whether there is any medication you can take with your GP/ENT doctor. If you are on anti-reflux medication, ensure you are taking it consistently as prescribed. Some medications can make reflux worse so it may be helpful to discuss this with your GP.
- Reduce stress levels as stress can make reflux worse
- Try eating small frequent meals, rather than large meals.
- Try not to go for long periods without food
- Take your time at mealtimes and chew well
- Avoid restrictive clothing around the waist
- Avoid eating main meals too close to bedtime or just before lying down
- Avoid vigorous exercise for 3 hours after eating



Patient Information

- Try not to bend at the waist after eating – bend from your knees if possible
- Raise the top of the bed by 4-6 inches using bricks or blocks under the mattress. The complete upper part of your body needs to be raised not just your head. Another option is to use a reflux board/wedge pillow. Piling up extra pillows doesn't work and could make your reflux worse.
- Drink before and after meals rather than during meals to prevent the stomach overfilling. Drinking water or chamomile tea between meals may help to reduce stomach acid.
- Prevent constipation by increasing fibre in your diet and aim for 2 litres of fluid per day. Try to maintain a healthy weight as obesity promotes reflux
- Consider stopping smoking and reducing your alcohol intake
- Avoid large amounts of fried or fatty foods, caffeinated drinks and highly spiced foods **only** if they make your symptoms worse. Try to identify specific foods or drinks that give you symptoms as the triggers can vary from person to person.

You can also find further information on Reflux at:

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Acid-Reflux-and-Oesophagitis.htm>

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, or would like to comment on this leaflet, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy team on Tel: 024 7696 6449

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us on 024 7696 6449 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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