

Acid reflux occurs when stomach contents reflux, or flow back, into the esophagus and mouth.

This action is common for a majority of people but can become a problem when it occurs consistently. Those who suffer from consistent acid reflux, along with heart burn, difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), and chest pain, are typically diagnosed with gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. Diet and lifestyle modifications can help to relieve GERD symptoms. Raising the end of the bed six to eight inches can help to reduce the chance of heart burn during the night by gravity preventing stomach acid from refluxing into the esophagus. Eating your last meal three, or more hours, before bedtime can also prevent reflux from occurring during the night.

Eating frequent and small meals throughout the day can help to prevent the stomach from becoming too distended, which can lead to acid reflux. When eating, it is important to sit down and eat at a calm and relaxed pace. This allows for food to be properly swallowed and digested. Chewing gum or using oral lozenges throughout the day can help to increase saliva production, which may help to clear stomach acid that has entered the esophagus. If you do smoke, it is important to quit. Smoking can decrease saliva production, allowing stomach acid to reflux and get stuck in the esophagus. Diet changes should include; limiting fat, pepper, peppermint, spearmint, chocolate, and alcohol. The following diet modifications can help to limit GERD symptoms from occurring.

### Foods to Enjoy

**Grains:** any grains prepared without added fat, choose whole grains for at least half grains consumed

**Vegetables:** any vegetables cooked without added fat, sauté, grill, boil, or steam

**Fruits:** most fruits prepared without added fat

**Proteins:** tender, well-cooked lean red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and soy products

**Dairy:** skim or low-fat milk, soy milk, non-fat or low-fat yogurt, non-fat or low-fat cheese, low-fat ice cream, and sherbet

**Beverages:** water, fruit juice made without citrus fruits, and caffeine free herbal teas (except those made with peppermint or spearmint)