

Eating Guidelines for Managing Reflux

Reflux is the back-up of stomach acid into the throat (esophagus). This back-up can cause a burning feeling in your throat or chest (sometimes referred to as heartburn). Even if you don't have these symptoms, it is important to treat reflux because it can cause damage to the esophagus.

Certain foods and lifestyle choices can increase reflux in some people. Use this fact sheet to help you make changes that may help.

Talk to your doctor if diet and lifestyle changes do not help or if you experience vomiting, fatigue and unplanned weight loss. Go to the clinic or emergency department if you are having chest pain or shortness of breath.



Steps you can take

The types of foods that may trigger your reflux can vary a lot from what may trigger symptoms in someone else.

- | Try keeping a food diary to record what you eat and drink, the amounts, the time, and any symptoms that follow. The diary can help you find patterns in what is causing your problems so you know which foods and drinks you need to limit or avoid.
- | The most common foods reported to cause symptoms include:
 - | spices, especially chili, cayenne and black pepper
 - | citrus fruits and juices like lemons, all types of oranges, limes, grapefruit, kumquat, pomelo and ugli fruit
 - | caffeine products such as coffee, tea or cola drinks
 - | tomato products (such as tomato juice and pasta sauce)
 - | onions and garlic
 - | peppermint
 - | chocolate
 - | carbonated beverages

You may find that eating a high fat, high calorie meal or large amounts of food at one time causes you discomfort with an increase in symptoms. Try eating smaller and lower fat meals.

Aim for a healthy body weight range (BMI between 18.5-25). Being overweight, especially around the waist, is a risk factor for reflux. Losing weight may help with your symptoms. See Additional Resources for more information on BMI and how to lose weight.

Eat a variety of foods. Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) to help you plan your meals and snacks and choose the amounts to eat to promote a healthy body weight for your sex and age.

- | Choose lower fat dairy products such as skim or 1% milk and yogurt and lower fat cheese (less than 20% M.F.).
- | Remove all visible fat from meat and skin from poultry before cooking. Use lean ground beef and pork and drain off the fat after browning. Choose plant-based, low fat alternatives like lentils, chickpeas and tofu often.
- | Snack on foods such as vegetables and fruit, and lower fat whole grain crackers.
- | Limit the following to special occasions:
 - | baked goods (such as cookies, cakes and muffins)
 - | soft drinks
 - | chocolate
 - | candy
 - | deep fried foods (such as French fries).
- | Limit the fat you use at the table and in cooking, such as margarine, butter, oil, salad dressing, to 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 Tbsp) each day. Refer to Additional Resources below for more information on different kinds of fats and how to include healthier fats in your diet.

If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Men should have no more than 15 drinks a week with no more than three drinks a day; and women should have no more than 10 drinks a week with no more than two drinks a day, on most days. A standard drink is equal to:

- | 341mL (12 oz.) bottle of 5% beer, cider and cooler

- | 142mL (5 oz.) glass 12% wine
- | 43mL (1.5 oz.) shot of 40% spirits

Other ways that may help to relieve your reflux include:

- | Avoid lying down two to three hours after eating.
- | Raise the head of your bed 20 cm (seven to eight inches) when sleeping. Try using "bed blocks," special foam wedges or pillows.
- | Sleep on your left side.
- | Wear clothing that is not tight across your waist.
- | Include regular physical activity to help manage your symptoms.



Additional Resources

- | How to Make Healthy Fat Choices
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=JMzqUQY=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMzqUQY=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- | Eating Guidelines to Cook and Prepare Foods Using Less Fat
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=JMzqUQc=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMzqUQc=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- | Healthy Steps for Healthy Weight Loss: Getting Started
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=JMfrXwQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfrXwQ=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- | Food and Symptom Journal [www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=J8frWQ0=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8frWQ0=&PreviewHandout=bA==)

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