

Nutrition Tips for GERD/Acid Reflux

GERD stands for gastroesophageal reflux disease and is commonly referred to as acid reflux. The most common symptom is heartburn. Heartburn occurs when the lining of the esophagus comes in contact with too much stomach acid, which can produce a burning pain and injure the esophagus. This is caused by a relaxed esophageal sphincter muscle (LES), the valve at the end of the esophagus connecting to the stomach. Acid reflux becomes GERD when the symptoms are bothersome or cause injury to the esophagus (when heartburn occurs at least 2-3 times/week). **Lifestyle and dietary changes are the most effective ways to treat acid reflux/GERD.**

DIET SPECIFICS

Portion size and fiber are the most important aspects of an anti-reflux diet. You should also aim for a diet low in trans and saturated fats and higher in protein, fruits, and vegetables.

Get Enough Fiber

Remember to drink plenty of water!

Include high-fiber foods in every meal and snack (whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds).

- 25g of fiber per day for 2,000 calories/day
- 30g of fiber per day for 2,500 calories/day

Foods to enjoy freely

Lean meats, chicken, and fish; natural unprocessed foods, fruits, vegetables, whole grains: cauliflower, zucchini, green beans, winter squash, sweet potatoes, eggplant, fennel, asparagus, artichokes, leafy greens (arugula, spinach, kale, chard, collards, cabbage), bananas, avocados, apples, mangos, apricots, peaches, berries, quinoa, oats, ginger, nuts, seeds.

Foods to eat moderately

(Avoid entirely when experiencing heartburn)

Milk, cheese, yogurt (always choose low-fat versions), citrus, tomatoes, spices (black pepper, crushed red pepper, Tabasco, chili powder, curry powder, mint, cloves, mustard seed, nutmeg).

Foods to eat only very small portions of

White potatoes, corn, peas, onion, garlic, bell peppers (especially green), radishes, cucumbers, beans, pasta, whole wheat, brown rice.

Foods to avoid

Mint, chocolate, saturated fat, processed meats (bacon, hot dogs, bologna), deep-fried foods, carbonated beverages, caffeine, coffee (including decaf), alcohol.

LIFESTYLE SPECIFICS

Lifestyle Do's

You don't have to make all these changes at once. Try a couple each week to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals
- Avoiding eating 3 hours before bedtime
- Exercise moderately (no sooner than 2 hours after a meal)
- Chew food well and eat slowly
- Drink water or herbal tea 30 minutes before or after your meals, not during
- Reduce stress
- Keep a heartburn journal (what you eat, when, how much, and heartburn occurrences)
- After a meal, chew gum (cinnamon or non-citrus fruit flavor) or suck on lozenges to increase saliva

Lifestyle Don'ts

- Smoking
- Poor sleeping patterns
- Overeating
- Being overweight
- Eating high-fat meals
- Sleeping or lying down after eating

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RECIPES:

1. Tell Me What to Eat if I Have Acid Reflux, Elaine Magee MPH, RD; 2009
2. The Acid Reflux Solution, Jorge E. Rodriguez MD; 2012
3. The Acid Reflux Diet, The Complete Idiot's Guide to, Maria A. Bella MS, RD, CDN; 2012