

Speech and Language Therapy

Acid Reflux

This leaflet is about acid reflux, also known as laryngo-pharyngeal reflux (LPR) or heartburn. It tells you some of the things you can do to reduce the risk, frequency and/or severity of attacks. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to your speech and language therapist (SLT).

What is acid reflux?

Stomach juices are made up of strong digestive acids and enzymes. It is not uncommon for these juices to travel upwards into the gullet (oesophagus) causing symptoms of indigestion (heart burn). This is usually referred to as 'gastro-oesophageal' reflux disease (GORD).

Sometimes, small amounts of these stomach juices can reach as far up as the throat (pharynx) and voice box (larynx). This is known as 'laryngo-pharyngeal reflux' (LPR) and is sometimes called 'silent reflux' as many people do not experience symptoms of heart burn. Acid reflux can occur during the day or night, even if a person hasn't eaten anything.

What are the symptoms?

These may vary but some of the most common symptoms of LPR are:

- a sensation of food sticking or a feeling of a lump in the throat
- a hoarse, tight or "croaky" voice
- frequent throat clearing
- difficulties swallowing (especially tablets or solid food)
- a sore, dry or sensitive throat
- occasional unpleasant 'acid or 'bilious' taste at the back of the mouth
- a feeling that too much mucus/phlegm is collecting in the throat
- sudden coughing or choking spasms at night
- chronic cough

What can I do to help?

There are many things you can do to help reduce the risk, frequency and/or severity of attacks of acid reflux.

Food and drink:

- eat smaller, more frequent meals, rather than starving yourself then eating a big meal - eat slowly, chewing each mouthful well
- eat less in the evening and leave at least three hours between your last meal and going to bed
- avoid eating 'on the run'
- sit upright when eating; don't sit in a low armchair with a tray on your lap
- try to remain upright at least one hour after eating - avoid slumping or bending over after eating
- chew sugar-free gum after meals
- drink plenty of water



Foods/drinks to avoid

- hot, spicy food; tomato based foods; onions; citrus fruits; juices; anything with vinegar
- fried, fatty or greasy foods
- caffeinated or fizzy drinks
- chocolate
- alcohol, particularly in the evenings
- very salty, crispy or crumbly foods - these may increase the irritation already caused by the reflux

Lifestyle

- avoid wearing tight clothing around your middle
- avoid stressful situations if you can and do things to help you to relax such as joining relaxation classes, doing yoga or going swimming
- if you smoke, give up
- raise the head end of your bed by putting blocks underneath, 10-25 cm high - just using more pillows will not do the trick
- if you are overweight, ask your doctor for some help and advice about losing weight

Contact details

Should you have any concerns or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Speech & Language Therapy Department

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Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or an alternative format

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