

## Lifestyle and Acid Reflux # 7 Helpful Tips

It's amazing how the lifestyle choices you make can affect your overall health. If you have been diagnosed with acid reflux, it's important to find out how to control your symptoms and begin living a more comfortable life. Acid reflux disease will never go away, but the effects can be reduced and the symptoms can be prevented through simple lifestyle changes. Try these seven tips before taking more drastic actions:

### 1. Eat Smaller Meals

If you typically eat three big meals a day, try adjusting your schedule to taking six small daily meals instead. This can help to prevent you from overeating. When your stomach gets too full, there is an increased amount of gastric pressure. Overeating is a major cause of acid reflux flare-ups, so stick to smaller meals and give your stomach a break. Eating more slowly can also help to reduce your discomfort.

### 2. No Bedtime Snacks

Don't eat or drink anything for at least two hours before going to bed. If you typically take an afternoon nap, try doing it in a chair. Lying down on a full stomach will cause the contents of your stomach to press against the lower esophagus, increasing the chances of acid reflux.

### 3. Watch What You Eat

Many common foods and beverages will trigger acid reflux either through the increased production of acid and gastric pressure, or by loosening up the lower esophagus muscle. Any foods that trigger heartburn should be avoided. Certain foods, spicy foods, coffee, and citrus fruits and juices can irritate the lining of the esophagus and should be eaten in moderation. Try to avoid eating these types of food with dinner, to help prevent nighttime heartburn. If you're not sure which foods tend to trigger your heartburn, try keeping a heartburn record for a week to determine which foods you need to stay away from.

### 4. Avoid Alcohol and Smoking

Alcohol consumption should also be avoided in your efforts to reduce acid reflux. Alcohol not only creates excess stomach acid, it also relaxes the lower esophagus muscle. When this muscle is relaxed, the contents of your stomach tend to reflux back up into the esophagus. If you do plan on consuming alcoholic beverages, do so in very small quantities. If complications arise, stop drinking alcohol altogether. Smoking is another poor choice for those with digestive problems. In addition to the seemingly endless list of health concerns caused by smoking, it also stimulates the production of stomach acid, leading to an increase of acid reflux symptoms.

### 5. Sleep Smart

The basic laws of gravity apply here. If you sleep with your head higher than your torso, the contents of your stomach are more likely to stay where they belong. Purchase a wedge-shaped pillow to keep your head and shoulders elevated. You can also try propping the legs of your bed with bricks or blocks to create an incline. Adjustable beds are also excellent choices.

### 6. Stay Comfortable

Tight-fitting clothing will constrict the area around your stomach. As a result of this squeezing action, the food in your stomach is forced up against the lower esophagus, and acid reflux will likely occur. Choose comfortable clothes with loose or adjustable waistlines.

### 7. Relax

Even though stress hasn't been specifically linked to heartburn, it has been known to lead to the behaviors that can trigger your acid reflux symptoms. Learn and implement good relaxation practices to help alleviate stress, and reduce your likeliness of taking part in stress-related heartburn behaviors.

Some health conditions aren't caused by a single factor; they're the result of many factors making up one big problem. Trying various lifestyle changes can add up to big relief from chronic acid reflux.