

Living With Heartburn and GERD: Your Daily Guide

Medical-Surgical · Gastrointestinal (GI)

GERD means stomach acid flows back up into the tube that carries food to your stomach. This causes heartburn. These steps help keep the acid down.

Change how you eat

- Eat smaller meals.
- **Stop eating 2 to 3 hours before you lie down or go to bed.**
- Stay upright after meals. Wear loose clothes around your waist.

Limit foods that bother you

- Common triggers: fatty foods, chocolate, peppermint, coffee and other caffeine, and alcohol.
- Spicy foods, citrus, and tomato bother some people.
- Cut back on the foods that cause your heartburn.

Raise the head of your bed

- Put 6- to 8-inch blocks under the legs at the head of your bed, or use a foam wedge.
- Extra pillows do not work. They bend you at the waist.

Help your body

- Lose weight if your provider advises it.
- Stop smoking.

Take medicines the right way

- Take your acid pill, such as omeprazole (Prilosec OTC), 30 to 60 minutes before breakfast.

- Take antacids (Tums) at least 2 hours apart from other medicines. Ask your pharmacist about yours.
- Do not use an over-the-counter acid pill for more than 14 days unless your provider tells you to.
- Do not stop a daily acid pill on your own.

Call your provider today if you have

- Trouble swallowing, or food that feels stuck
- Pain when you swallow
- Weight loss without trying
- Vomiting that keeps coming back
- Heartburn that does not get better with treatment

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- Black, sticky stools with dizziness or fainting
- Chest pain or pressure, or pain that spreads to your arm, jaw, or back
- **Do not assume chest pain is heartburn.**

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclxpath.com/patient-education/gerd-heartburn-self-care/patient

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