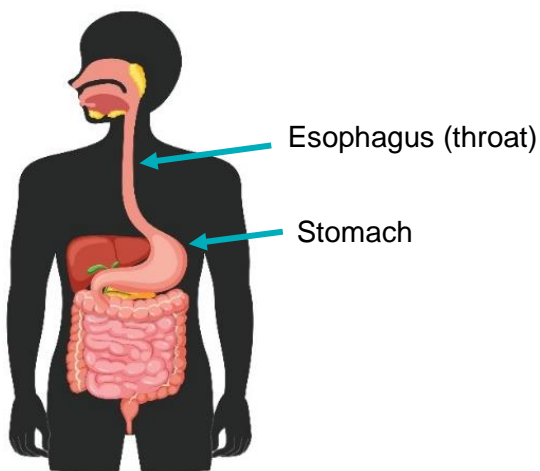


Managing Acid Reflux

What is acid reflux?

Acid reflux is when acid from your stomach backs up into your esophagus (throat). It may feel like mild burning in your mid-chest area. This is also called heartburn. Other symptoms of acid reflux include burping, a sour taste in your mouth, and a sore throat.

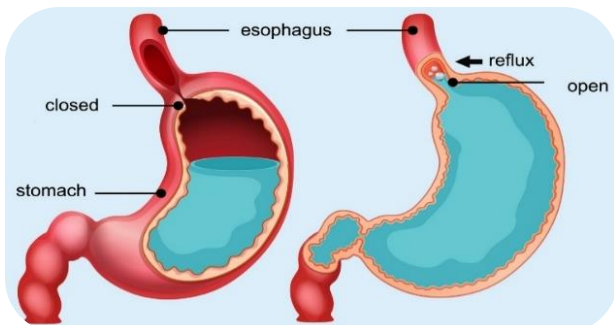
You may notice symptoms of acid reflux after meals or when laying down.



When the opening from your esophagus to your stomach is strong, it stays closed after food passes through. When it is closed, it keeps the stomach acid from backing up through it.

Acid reflux can happen if the opening from your stomach to your esophagus is weak, causing it to open. When it is open, it lets stomach acid through, which is called acid reflux.

Acid reflux may also happen when food takes longer to leave the stomach.



No acid reflux

Acid reflux

What is GERD?

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a more serious form of acid reflux. This is when acid reflux is long term (chronic) and causes damage to the body over time.

What can I do to make my acid reflux or GERD better?

Changing what and how you eat can sometimes help lower your symptoms of acid reflux. Lifestyle changes can help too. If a certain food or action doesn't cause you symptoms, you don't need to avoid it.

Also, the foods that bother you at one time may not bother you forever. When ready, try a small amount to see if it still bothers you. Everyone is different.

Eating tips to try

- Try to eat 5–6 small meals throughout the day.
- Eat and drink slowly, and chew foods well.
- Add foods with fibre, like vegetables, fruits, and whole grains to each meal.
- Choose lean protein foods, like chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, beans, and legumes.
- Choose lean cuts for meats such as beef, pork, and wild game like venison and elk. Look for little or no marbling and trim extra fat.
- Choose lower fat foods. Fat takes longer to leave your stomach, which may make symptoms worse for some people.
 - Choose lower fat dairy products, like 2% milk fat (MF) or less for milk and yogurts, 20% MF or less for cheese.
 - If needed for moisture, use small amounts of fat on foods. This includes butter, gravy, and creamy sauces.
- Use lower fat cooking methods like grilling, baking, or steaming.

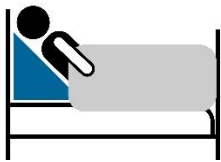
Try to limit

These foods tend to make acid reflux symptoms worse. Limit or avoid them if they bother you.

- alcohol and peppermint. These may relax the opening of the stomach.
- citrus fruits and juices, tomatoes, chocolate, onions, garlic, and strong spices
- coffee, tea, energy drinks, pop, chocolate, and some medicines with caffeine. These relax the opening of the stomach.
- fatty foods like bacon, sausage, fried and deep-fried foods such as French fries, and snack foods like chips
- pop or other fizzy drinks, chewing gum, or using drinking straws

Lifestyle tips

- Nicotine relaxes the opening of the stomach. If you smoke and want help to quit, check out [AlbertaQuits.ca](https://www.albertaquits.ca).
- Extra body weight can make symptoms worse. If able, reducing your body weight may help lower the pressure on the opening of the stomach.
- When sleeping or resting, keep your head higher than your stomach. Lying flat can make reflux worse.
 - Prop your upper body up with pillows to keep your head and upper body higher.
 - Raise the head of your bed 15–20 cm (6–8 in) by using foam wedges.



- Wear loose clothing. Tight clothing across your stomach and chest can put pressure on your stomach and make symptoms worse.

When to talk to your healthcare provider

Talk to your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the symptoms below. These symptoms may not be signs of GERD and might need medical attention right away:

- black poop
- chest pain
- losing weight without trying
- trouble swallowing
- vomiting

Also talk to your healthcare provider if you:

- want to use antacids or other medicines for your acid reflux
- think your other medicines might be making your acid reflux worse
- notice your symptoms don't get better with diet and lifestyle changes
- have been on acid reflux medicines for a long time. This may make it harder for your body to use certain vitamins and you may need vitamin supplements.

For more support



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](https://www.ahs.ca/811) on [ahs.ca/811](https://www.ahs.ca/811).
- Visit [ahs.ca/Nutrition](https://www.ahs.ca/Nutrition).