



## Acid Reflux

Reflux is the regurgitation of acid stomach contents back into the gullet, and even up to the back of the throat. In some people this causes heartburn and indigestion, but in others it does not, and then it is called “Silent Reflux”.

### Silent Reflux causes:

- Hoarseness
- Trouble swallowing
- Too much mucus in the throat
- A “lump” in the throat (“Globus”)
- Irritable cough
- Choking episodes, especially at night
- Sore throats
- Burning / Dryness in the throat

### What can I do to reduce this reflux?

- If you use tobacco, **STOP**. Smoking makes you reflux. After every cigarette, you have some reflux. Ask about your local Smoking Cessation Clinic.
- Take your reflux medication every day as prescribed **without fail**. Missing even one day can cause further damage to your voice box. Keep taking it until you are told to stop. **Get further prescriptions from your GP**.
- Don't wear clothing that is too tight, especially around the waist (trousers, corsets, belts).
- Bending over can trigger reflux, as can lifting heavy objects or straining due to constipation.
- Do not lie down, just after eating . . . in fact, do not eat within three hours of bedtime.
- Raising the head of your bed can help, as can lying on your left side rather than the right.
- You should eat a low-fat diet. Limit your intake of fatty foods and butter. Avoid fried foods, chips, crisps, chocolate, cheese and pastry.
- Coffee, citrus juices, and any form of fizzy drink can make things worse. Coca Cola and Pepsi are particularly bad as they are very acidic as well as fizzy.
- It is helpful to chew gum containing bicarbonate of soda (sold as “tooth whitening gum”).
- If you are overweight, this will contribute, but be warned that extreme physical exercise can also cause reflux.
- Alcohol makes reflux worse, so limit your intake. Spirits and white wine are the worst offenders.

### **How is Silent Reflux treated?**

Each patient requires individual treatment tailored to their needs, and your doctor or therapist will suggest the best treatment for you. There are several treatments for reflux:

- Changing habits and diet to reduce reflux
- Medications to reduce stomach acid
- Occasionally surgery to reduce reflux is recommended

### **Medical treatments**

Antacid medications which also contain alginate (such as **Gaviscon Advance**) are very helpful. Some patients are asked to take this every night before going to bed (it should be the last thing you swallow before going to bed), while others are also asked to take it after each meal as well.

Acid blocking tablets called Proton Pump Inhibitors (including **Rabeprazole** (Pariet), **Pantoprazole** (Protium), **Lansoprazole** (Zoton) and **Omeprazole/Esomeprazole** (Losec/Nexium) are often used. These are used twice daily in Silent Reflux, to reduce acid production by the stomach. They should be taken half an hour before breakfast and evening meal. **THESE TABLETS NEED TO BE USED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS TO WORK, SO PLEASE ARRANGE REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS FROM YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR.** If you have a follow-up appointment, keep taking the tablets until you are instructed otherwise.

Other acid blocking tablets such as **Ranitidine** (Zantac) or **Cimetidine** (Tagamet) are occasionally used, especially for patients who cannot tolerate the more powerful PPIs listed above.

Surgery is occasionally required to repair the leaky valve between the stomach and gullet which leads to reflux, especially in more severe cases which do not respond well to medications. A form of keyhole surgery called Endoscopic Fundoplication is usually used.

### **Want to know more?**

Visit <http://www1.wfubmc.edu/voice/reflux/> or <http://voicedisorders.upmc.com/LPRD/> to find more detailed information.