

HEALTHFUL TIPS

Tips to Knock Out Heartburn

What is heartburn? Heartburn happens when the stomach contents back up into the esophagus (gastroesophageal reflux or GER) and irritate the lining of the esophagus. Obesity greatly increases the risk for heartburn—3 times the risk for men and 6 times the risk for women.

Gastric bypass often results in improved or resolved heartburn, whereas gastric sleeve surgery may not improve heartburn. In fact some people may develop heartburn after gastric sleeve surgery.

If heartburn persists, contact your bariatric surgeon for an evaluation—don't let it go untreated. To reduce heartburn:

Lifestyle

- Don't eat for two to three hours before going to bed.
- Keep portions small ½ -1 cup of food at a time and don't drink for at least 30 minutes after eating.
- Eat slowly and calmly. Put your fork down between bites.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing.
- Stay away from foods and beverages that trigger your heartburn symptoms. More common foods/beverages include onions, peppermint, chocolate, caffeinated drinks, coffee, citrus fruits or juices, tomatoes, high-fat foods and spicy foods.
- Don't smoke or be around others who are smoking.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Place a six-inch block under the bed posts to raise the head of your bed. Don't pile on the pillows—you'll increase the pressure on your stomach.

Medications

Work with your doctor to find the right medication or combination of medications to treat your heartburn.



Heartburn medicines work in different ways. You may need a combination of medicines to control your symptoms. Common medications include:

- Antacids work to neutralize the acid in your stomach and include over-the-counter medicines such as Maalox, Mylanta, Riopan, and Roloids. Antacids can have side effects, including diarrhea and constipation.
- H2 blockers work by decreasing acid production. They provide short-term or on-demand relief for many people with heartburn symptoms. They can also help heal the esophagus. H2 blockers can be purchased over the counter or prescribed by your doctor. Common H2 blockers include cimetidine (Tagamet HB), famotidine (Pepcid AC), nizatidine (Axid AR), and ranitidine (Zantac 75).
- Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) lower the amount of acid your stomach makes and are often better at treating heartburn symptoms than H2 blockers. They help to heal the esophagus and are useful for long-term treatment. Care should be taken; studies show that people who take PPIs for a long time are more likely to have hip, wrist, and spinal fractures. Types of PPIs available by prescription include esomeprazole (Nexium), lansoprazole (Prevacid), omeprazole (Prilosec, Zegerid), pantoprazole (Protonix), and rabeprazole (AcipHex). Lower strength medications including omeprazole or lansoprazole are available over the counter.