



GERD & Your Lifestyle

Lifestyle changes may help reduce the frequency of heartburn and symptoms that may be related to GERD like cough. Consider trying:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Excess pounds put pressure on your abdomen, pushing on your stomach and causing acid to back up in your esophagus. If your weight is healthy, work to maintain it. If you are overweight or obese, work slowly to lose weight – no more than 1 or 2 pounds a week. Ask your doctor for help devising a weight loss strategy that will work for you.
- **Avoid tight fitting clothing.** Clothes that fit tightly around your waist put pressure on your abdomen and the lower esophageal sphincter.
- **Avoid food that trigger heartburn.** Everyone has specific triggers. Common triggers such as fatty or fried foods, alcohol, chocolate, mint, garlic, onion, and caffeine may make heartburn worse.
- **Do not lie down after a meal.** Wait at least 3 hrs. before lying down or going to bed after a meal.
- **Elevate the head of your bed.** An elevation of about 6-9 inches puts gravity to work for you. Placing wood blocks or cement blocks under the feet of the head of your bed. If it's not possible to elevate your bed, you can insert a wedge between your mattress and box springs to elevate your body from the waist up. Wedges are available at drugstores or medical supply stores.
- **Do not smoke.** Smoking decreases the lower esophageal sphincter's ability to function properly allowing acid to creep up into the esophagus.

Be compliant with GERD medications.

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