

Acid reflux and your voice

How it can affect your voice and what you can do to help

Did you know

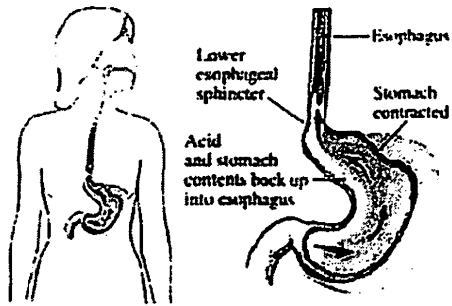
- Stomach acid can flow backwards from your stomach?
- Acid reflux can be detected in different ways?
- Acid from your stomach can affect your voice, throat, breathing and swallowing?
- Singers often suffer from reflux?
- Doctors can see signs of acid reflux in your throat?
- There are many ways to treat acid reflux?

Acid Reflux

The esophagus is the tube that joins your mouth to your stomach. Reflux happens when the valve of your stomach doesn't work well. As a result, acid flows back from your stomach upwards into the esophagus. If this happens repeatedly it is called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

When the reflux reaches all the way up to the larynx (voice box) or pharynx (throat), is called laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR). LPR is often linked to voice problems.

Lifestyle and diet may make reflux worse.



Symptoms of Acid Reflux

- Hoarse voice
- Clearing your throat
- Feeling a “lump in your throat”
- Post-nasal drip
- A lot of throat mucus
- Bitter taste in mouth or throat
- Problems swallowing food, liquids or pills
- Coughing after eating or lying down
- Breathing problems
- Choking
- Night-time coughing
- Heartburn, chest pain or indigestion

Any of these symptoms may be related to acid reflux. Many of them may be worse in the morning. Acid reflux can also cause breathing problems like asthma or pneumonia, or make them worse.

Singers and acid reflux

LPR can affect anybody, but it’s a special problem for singers. The breath support used when singing puts extra pressure on the stomach, which can cause more reflux. Performers may also experience high stress and frequently eat late which can increase reflux.

Signs of acid reflux in the throat

A doctor who is trained in ear, nose and throat problems (otolaryngologist) may see signs of acid reflux irritation in your throat. Red, swollen tissues and sticky, white mucous can be signs of acid reflux.

Other tests for reflux

Your doctor may send you for some tests for acid reflux. Possible tests include: a scope, a barium xray, and/or pH monitoring. You may also go for a blood test to see if you have a stomach bacteria called H. Pylori. Sometimes your doctor will try a medication before sending you for a test.

Treatment of acid reflux

Acid reflux can be treated with medication. Your doctor may give you different types of antacid medications. Changes in your lifestyle are also helpful.

Sometimes medication and lifestyle changes don’t help enough. An operation called fundoplication can help some people. This operation makes the LES stronger. Ask your doctor about this operation.

Lifestyle choices that help control acid reflux:

- Do not smoke
- Use a 15 to 20 cm (6 to 8 inch) wedge pillow for sleeping, or raise the head of bed 6 inches
- Sleep on your left side
- Eat small-sized meals

- Eat often during the day (instead of three large meals)
- Choose foods low in fat
- Stop eating a least three hours before bedtime
- Stop eating 2 hours before exercise
- Avoid foods that make reflux worse (such as caffeine, citrus fruits and juices, alcohol, mint/menthol, high fat dairy products, tomato based foods, and spicy or high-fat foods)
- Keep a healthy weight
- Avoid tight clothing around the waist (e.g., wide belts)
- Manage stress as it can make reflux worse

Key Points

Acid reflux is a common problem. To get better, you need to:

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Manage your stress
- Get medical treatment

For more suggestions:

- www.heartburnalliance.org
- www.dieticians.ca