

Reflux Advice

A patient's advice sheet

What is reflux?

Reflux is the backflow or leaking of gastric contents or gastric juices (acid) from your stomach up through your oesophagus (food pipe) and into your throat. If you experience reflux on a regular basis it can cause your voice quality to change or affect your lungs.

What are the symptoms of Reflux?

You may experience one or more of the following:

- Recurrent coughing
- Hoarse voice
- Sore throat
- Dry mouth
- Excessive mucus and a need to clear your throat
- Heartburn or indigestion
- A sensation of a lump in your throat
- A bad taste in the mouth

How does Reflux affect my voice?

1. The gastric juices/content coming up into your throat can cause inflammation and discomfort in your larynx (voice box). This may cause a change in your voice quality or lead to coughing/throat clearing. This in turn may affect your voice.
2. Your throat may try to protect your voice box from the reflux by squeezing the muscles together. This can cause excessive muscle tension that may result in discomfort, a feeling of a lump in your throat or a change in your voice quality.

How is Reflux treated?

It might be appropriate for you to take medications to help with reflux. This can be discussed with your doctor or pharmacist. If you are already taking reflux medicine the doctor may adjust your dose.

If your voice is affected by reflux, a speech and language therapist may be able to advise you on

how to manage the symptoms and to help with any voice problems you are experiencing.

What can make reflux worse?

- Cigarette smoking
- Coffee (both regular and decaffeinated) and other drinks containing caffeine e.g. Coke
- Alcohol
- Carbonated drinks
- Citrus fruits
- Tomato products
- Chocolates, mints or peppermints
- Fatty foods or spicy foods e.g. pizza, chili, curry
- Onions
- Lying down too soon after eating
- Being overweight or obese
- Aspirin or Ibuprofen
- Certain medicines (discuss with your doctor)

What can you do to help your symptoms?

- Place 6 inch blocks/books under the legs of the head of your bed to raise your head above your stomach. Extra pillows won't help.
- Try not to eat at least three hours before lying down and not drinking at least two hours before lying down. If you take naps try sleeping in a chair.
- If you smoke, quit. Ask your doctor or nurse for advice on how to stop.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Seek support from an appropriate professional.
- Eat smaller meals more frequently rather than three large meals.
- Avoid tight clothes and tight belts.
- Avoid food and drinks that cause heart burn.

**If you have any questions, please contact
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