

## **Learn How to Combat Acid Reflux**

Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Michael Roizen Give Tips on Managing GERD

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Heartburn or acid reflux — no matter what you call it, that burning sensation inside the chest after eating certain foods can cause real problems for chronic sufferers.

Almost 20 million people have Gastroesophageal reflux, and it causes nearly five million doctors' visits annually. While the condition can cause sleep disorders, asthma, bad breath, rotten teeth and even esophageal cancer, it is treatable.

Oprah's favorite go-to doc, Dr. Mehmet Oz, and Dr. Michael Roizen offer tips on what to do and how to manage GERD. Check out their suggestions below.

### **How do you know that what you're feeling is more than one bad meal? How is GERD diagnosed?**

Everyone gets occasional reflux, which is actually a good thing. It allows us to experiment with novel foods and vomit or burp afterward — unlike horses, which commonly die from colic after stomach distension. However, if symptoms persist for greater than two days per week for three months, then you may have acid reflux.

### **What causes GERD?**

The stomach has the same acidity as battery acid, but it is built to handle its acid. The esophagus cannot tolerate the acid so it enters at an acute angle that kinks off the stomach fluid. When the stomach is pulled down (by fat or a hernia), the esophagus unkinks and acid burns the esophagus and can move up into the mouth and lungs. A valve at the junction of the stomach and esophagus can help protect the esophagus as well, but the key is what and how much we eat.

If acid does move up into your mouth and lungs, it can cause bad breath, asthma and dental problems because the acid can rot teeth and cause vocal cord problems.

### **What can you do to prevent this reflux?**

- Lose weight. Extra fat puts more pressure on the omentum, the apron of fat that covers the stomach, which pushes acid up toward the esophagus.
- Wear loose clothes and avoid "Texas belt syndrome." Anything tight on the abdomen puts pressure on the stomach, pushing acid up toward the esophagus.
- Avoid chocolate, caffeinated beverages, tomato-based foods, high-fat and fried foods, alcohol and cigarettes. These foods slow digestion and push foods back up toward the esophagus.
- If you already have symptoms, elevate the head of your bed with two blocks or books. Put them on the floor to prop up the headboard. More pillows under your head won't help. You need to raise your head higher than your stomach, using gravity to keep stomach acids where they belong — in your stomach.

### **What types of treatments are available?**

There are medications like antacid, acid-suppressing drugs that are very helpful. The hitch: reducing acid may stop reflux, but the stomach needs acid for digestion. There is also minimally invasive surgery that can be a very successful last resort, which will re-kink the valve that keeps acid in the stomach — where it belongs.