



Diet for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

Explanation of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease: The purpose of the esophagus is to carry food from the throat to the stomach. However, it is not just a simple tube. The lower esophagus has a specialized muscle around it that usually stays tightly closed, opening only to allow food and liquid into the stomach. It acts to prevent the reflux of stomach acid into the esophagus.

Symptoms occur when this specialized muscle weakens and allows stomach acid to splash up into the esophagus. These symptoms include heartburn, chest discomfort, and bitter fluid flowing up into the mouth. If the stomach juice trickles into the breathing tubes, hoarseness, cough, and even shortness of breath can occur. This entire problem is called GERD or Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease. A number of factors, including certain foods, may cause the lower esophageal muscle to relax causing GERD.

Special Considerations: The lower esophageal muscle can be weakened by factors other than food. The following recommendations may be helpful in reducing symptoms:

1. Stop using tobacco in all forms
2. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea, soda, etc.
3. Avoid chewing gum & hard candy. They increase the amount of swallowed air which in turn leads to belching and reflux
4. Eat small, frequent portions of food and snacks as needed
5. Avoid tight clothing & bending over after eating
6. Lose weight if overweight. Obesity leads to increase reflux
7. Elevate the head of the bed six to eight inches to prevent reflux when sleeping. Extra pillows by themselves are not helpful.

Nutrition Recommendations for GERD

Group	Recommend	Avoid
Milk / Milk Products	Buttermilk, evaporated skim milk, fat free (skim) milk, or low fat (1%) milk, soy milk, nonfat or lowfat yogurt, powdered milk, nonfat or low-fat cheeses, low fat ice cream, sherbet	Whole milk, 2% milk, cream, high-fat cheeses, high-fat yogurt, chocolate milk, cocoa
Meat and Other Protein Foods	Tender, well-cooked lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, soy prepared without fat, dried beans and peas.	Fried meats, cold cuts, sausage, pepperoni, hot dogs, bacon, fatty meat, chicken fat/ skin.
Grains	Any prepared without added fat; choose whole grains for at least half of your grain servings.	Any grains prepared with high fat.
Vegetables	Any prepared without added fat. Eat a variety of vegetables especially green and orange ones.	Fried or creamy style vegetables such as French fries and deep fried vegetables, tomatoes.
Fruits	Any prepared without added fat. Eat a variety of fruits.	Citrus, organs, grapefruit, pineapple. (these may vary from person to person)
Fats	Limit to less than 8 teaspoons per day; use heart healthy fats like canola or olive oil.	All animal or vegetable fats after 8 teaspoons/ day.
Sweets / Desserts	All items made with no or low fat (less than or equal to 3 gm fat/ day.	Chocolate, desserts made with oils and/ or fats. Doughnuts, French toast. Pastries. Cakes. Cookies.
Soups	Fat-free or low fat based	Chicken, beef, milk or cream - based soups.
Beverages	Caffeine-free herbal teas except those made with peppermint or spearmint. Juices (except citrus), water.	Alcohol. Coffee (regular and decaffeinated), beverages, tea, mint tea.