



## **LARYNGITIS AND SORE THROATS FROM ACID REFLUX PATIENT INFORMATION**

As many as 30% of people have a hiatal hernia or malfunctioning lower esophageal sphincter (LES). The LES is a muscular valve between the stomach and the esophagus which keeps acidic stomach contents from refluxing (going backwards) up the esophagus. When a person with acid reflux reclines for sleep, acid may travel up to the level of the throat and come into contact with the pharynx and larynx. Because acid reflux occurs during sleep, the person may be unaware that this is happening. Persons with acid reflux may experience symptoms which are direct, indirect, or both.

### **DIRECT SYMPTOMS**

Heartburn  
Acid belching

### **INDIRECT SYMPTOMS**

Scratchy, raw, dry or irritated throat, often worse in the morning and improving throughout the day  
Excessive morning mucus  
Throat clearing  
Chronic irritative cough  
Husky, or low pitched morning voice often requiring prolonged singing voice warm-up

### **TREATMENT MEASURES (Do all of these):**

Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods, mint, citrus, carbonated beverages, vinegar-based salad dressings and chocolate, particularly after 2:00 p.m. These substances may increase stomach acidity and/or may make the LES function poorly.

Eat the last meal/snack of the day no fewer than three hours before going to sleep. In addition, try to eat the heavier meal of the day at noon and a lighter one in the evening. The idea here is that the stomach be relatively empty when one lies down so that there is not a lot of "back pressure" to push stomach contents up the esophagus and into the throat, and also that the stomach has returned to baseline acidity before sleep.

Use four to six inch bed blocks under the head posts of the bed. Old books or wooden blocks work well for this purpose. This procedure puts the entire bed on a slight downward slant from head to foot. During sleep, gravity now assists in keeping stomach acid where it belongs. Some persons prefer instead to sleep with a large foam wedge under the entire upper body. These wedges are available from medical equipment supply stores.

Use one of the following medical regimens. They, from strongest to weakest:

Prilosec or Prevacid, taken one hour before dinner.

Zantac, Pepcid, Axid, or Tagamet. Double the dose if an over-the-counter preparation is used. Take one hour before bed.

Propulsid

Antacids such as Gaviscon, taken at bedtime.

(Occasionally, various combinations of 2, 3 and 4 are also utilized.)

It is recommended that a trial of the above measures be continued for a minimum of two weeks and that none of the treatments outlined be omitted. If you have further questions, do not hesitate to call your physician/nurse.