

Reflux

Gastric reflux is a common medical problem that causes heartburn, chest pain, and cough. Treatment improves the symptoms and prevents damage to the esophagus. Below are lifestyle changes to get you started, but the best approach is to see a primary care physician to see if medical treatments would help.

Exercise

30 minutes of aerobic exercise a day is idea. It can be even better to spread it out in 10 minute chunks. Aerobic means raising your heart rate by 10 beats per minute. This can include swimming, dancing, walking fast, jogging, jump rope, bicycling. If you have a heart, lung or bone condition that may cause medical problems with exercise check with your medical doctor first.

Diet

Avoid laying down for 30 minutes after eating.

Avoid: spicy foods, fatty foods, caffeine, chocolate, mint, tomato, alcohol.

Those foods trigger reflux in general, but everyone is different. Pay attention to foods that trigger it in you.

Eat more almonds, vegetables, and fiber will help.

Medication

There are many over the counter meds for reflux. There is controversy about using proton pump inhibitors for longer than two weeks because of long term health risks like more fragile bones. H2-blockers are safer (e.g. Ranitidine). Antacids can also be taken as needed and do not have the risks of proton pump inhibitors:

- Alka-Seltzer
- Milk of Magnesia
- Alternagel, Amphojel
- Gaviscon, Gelusil, Maalox, Mylanta, Roloids
- Pepto-Bismol
- Tums

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/28/2025