

What is reflux?

Acid reflux is when the acid that is normally in your stomach backs up into the esophagus. The esophagus is the tube that carries food from your mouth to your stomach

When acid reflux causes bothersome symptoms or damage, doctors call it "gastroesophageal reflux disease" or "GERD."

What are the symptoms of acid reflux?

The most common symptoms are:

- Heartburn, which is a burning feeling in the chest
- Regurgitation, which is when acid and undigested food flow back into your throat or mouth

Other symptoms might include:

- Stomach or chest pain
- Trouble swallowing
- Having a raspy voice or a sore throat
- Unexplained cough
- Nausea or vomiting

Is there anything I can do on my own to feel better?

Yes. You might feel better if you:

- Lose weight (if you are overweight)
- Avoid foods that make your symptoms worse – For some people these include coffee, chocolate, alcohol, peppermint, and fatty foods.
- Stop smoking, if you smoke
- Avoid late meals – Lying down with a full stomach can make reflux worse. Try to plan meals for at least 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.

How is acid reflux treated?

There are a few main types of medicines that can help with the symptoms of acid reflux. The most common are antacids, histamine blockers, and proton pump inhibitors. All of these medicines work by reducing or blocking stomach acid. But they each do that in a different way.

- For mild symptoms, antacids can help, but they work only for a short time. Histamine blockers are stronger and last longer than antacids. You can buy antacids and most histamine blockers without a prescription.
- For frequent and more severe symptoms, proton pump inhibitors are the most effective medicines. Some of these medicines are sold without a prescription. But there are other versions that your doctor can prescribe.

Should I see a doctor or about my acid reflux?

Some people can manage their acid reflux on their own by changing their habits or taking non-prescription medicines. But you should see a doctor if:

- Your symptoms are severe or last a long time
- You cannot seem to control your symptoms
- You have had symptoms for many years

You should also see a doctor **right away** if you:

- Have trouble swallowing, or feel as though food gets "stuck" on the way down
- Lose weight when you are not trying to
- Have chest pain
- Choke when you eat
- Vomit blood or have bowel movements that are red, black, or look like tar