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Greenville Ear, Nose & Throat

## Esophageal Reflux

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In some people, irritating acid and stomach juices leak out of the stomach and into the esophagus and throat. The result is irritation and muscle spasms in the throat, otherwise known as esophageal reflux.

Common symptoms that may indicate you have esophageal reflux include the following:

- Cough
- Burning in the throat
- Sore throat
- Hoarseness
- Clearing of the throat
- Excess mucous (postnasal drip)
- Bad taste
- Feeling of a “lump” in the throat

Following the instructions listed in the next column can help ease reflux by ...

1. Reducing the volume in the stomach
2. Decreasing pressure in the abdomen
3. Eliminating esophageal irritants
4. Neutralizing stomach acid

Use as many of the suggestions below as you need to get relief. If these tips do not help or symptoms get worse, contact your doctor.

1. Take a liquid antacid (Gelusil, Maalox or one of your choice) 20-30 minutes after meals and at bedtime.
2. Lose weight if you are overweight.
3. Restrict your diet to bland foods. Eat several small meals a day. Avoid highly seasoned food and foods that are very hot or very cold.
4. Chew food thoroughly.
5. Avoid alcohol, tobacco and coffee because they irritate the esophagus. Alcohol and coffee also stimulate stomach secretions.
6. Do not eat for 3-4 hours before going to bed.
7. For overnight relief, elevate the head of your bed as symptoms are more likely to occur if you lie flat. The best way to elevate your bed is to place cinder blocks, wood or bricks under the legs of the bed. Raise the bed 4-11 inches (8 inches is about average). If raising your bed is not practical, sleep on 2-3 pillows. Some people find that sleeping on their right side prevents reflux.
8. Avoid clothing that fits snugly across the mid-section of the body. Women should not wear a girdle. Men should not wear a belt but use suspenders instead. Do not wear abdominal supporting belts.
9. Limit the time you spend bending or stooping. Activities such as gardening and other exercises that involve lifting or bending may bring on reflux.