Nutrition Guidelines for Gastroesophageal Reflux (GERD)

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is the reflux of gastric acid into the esophagus (gastro=stomach). The main symptom of GERD is a burning sensation in the chest, which could be described as heartburn. GERD can also be present without heartburn. Other symptoms of GERD may include difficulty in swallowing, hoarseness and coughing.

Work with your doctor for treatment of GERD

Certain foods have been recommended to be removed from the diet as they may aggravate GERD:

- Fatty foods (whole fat dairy, creamy/cheesy sauces, fried/stir fried foods, etc)
- Chocolate
- Citrus fruits/citrus fruit juices (lemon, orange, tangerine, pineapple, grapefruit)
- Spicy foods (foods made with garlic, onion, peppers, etc)
- Tomatoes and tomato products (marinara sauce, pizza, salsa, tomato juice, etc)
- Caffeinated/carbonated beverages (coffee, tea, sodas, etc)
- Alcohol

There is not enough scientific evidence to support that avoiding these foods may reduce GERD. You can avoid or limit these foods to see if it would help, but there is no need to do this if they do not bother you.

Overall, avoid or limit any food that bothers you. Keep a food and symptom diary for a few days to identify foods that could be a problem for you.

Lifestyle Habits to Adopt That May Help Reduce Reflux

- Sit up while eating and for one or two hours afterward
- Eat small frequent meals throughout the day
- Avoid eating within 3 hours before bedtime
- Elevate the head of the bed while you are sleeping. You can place a phone book or a foam wedge underneath the mattress to do this.
- Lose weight if you are overweight or obese
- Exercise


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