



<https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk>

HEARTBURN, REFLUX, NAUSEA AND VOMITING

Heartburn is a burning feeling in the chest caused by stomach acid travelling up towards the throat (acid reflux). If it keeps happening, it's called **reflux** or gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD).

The main symptoms of acid reflux are:

- a burning sensation in the middle of your chest
- an unpleasant taste in your mouth

Here are some suggestions to try to reduce heartburn and reflux:

- Avoid eating large meals; instead, eat little and often
- Fizzy drinks, caffeinated drinks e.g. coffee, tomatoes, alcohol and fatty or spicy foods may make symptoms worse so try to minimise these foods
- Allow hot foods to cool a little and cold foods to warm a little at room temperature before consuming
- Sit at the table to eat and avoid bending over for a couple of hours after eating a meal
- Try not to fill up on fluids when you are eating. Instead try to take fluids between meals to keep hydrated
- Avoid lying down for at least 2 hours after eating
- Elevate the head of your bed - if you regularly experience heartburn while trying to sleep, place wood or cement blocks under the feet at the top of your bed so that the head end is raised by 6 to 9 inches. If you can't elevate the head of your bed, you can insert a wedge between your mattress and bed base or purchase a wedge pillow to sleep on to elevate your body from the waist up.
- Talk to your healthcare team about medications that may help e.g. proton pump inhibitors on prescription or over the counter medications

If you are feeling sick or being sick:

Nausea and vomiting can be treated well using antiemetic drugs speak to your doctor or pharmacist about what is best for you

- Don't force yourself to eat a meal if the nausea is bad. Consider taking snacks/nibbles
- Eat frequent small snacks, particularly when you are feeling hungry, rather than sticking to meal times
- Eat dry food, such as toast, savoury or plain crackers or breakfast biscuits if you are able to
- Eat light foods such as soup, jelly and ice cream, greek yogurt and honey or creme caramel
- Consume nourishing drinks to obtain extra calories and protein (e.g. hot chocolate, milkshakes)
- Eat cold meals if the smell of cooking makes you feel sick or get someone else do the cooking for you
- Avoid being near smells of cooking as these may make you feel worse before your meal. Eat in a separate room from where the food is cooked if possible
- Avoid fried and fatty foods and those with a strong smell
- Ventilate the room you are eating in or sit near an open window if you can
- Sit upright at a table to eat and stay sitting for a short time after the meal to help your food to digest properly
- Try some of the following foods and drinks to see if they help - ginger biscuits, ginger cordial or ginger ale, ginger or peppermint tea, boiled fruit drops, fizzy drinks such as lemonade and cola (allow to go a little flat). Sipping slowly through a straw may also help
- Anxiety can make nausea worse, so try to make meal times calm

