

LARYNGOPHARYNGEAL REFLUX

Laryngopharyngeal Reflux is a disorder in which the valve that keeps stomach acid from flowing backwards into the esophagus (the swallowing tube) does not function well. Sometimes this condition is associated with a hiatal hernia, but not always, nor does every patient with a hiatal hernia have reflux.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of this condition are varied. Persons with it may have some or all of the following:

1. A feeling of a lump in the throat.
2. Difficulty swallowing.
3. Recurring sore throats.
4. Intermittent or chronic hoarseness or other voice disorders.
5. Frequent clearing of the throat because of a feeling of something present or, perhaps, a feeling of swelling in the lower throat.
6. Redness and/or swelling of the larynx (voice box) to examination.
7. Tenderness of the middle and lower throat areas.
8. Persons with Laryngopharyngeal Reflux may or may not have heartburn and indigestion.
9. Intermittent cough which may be worse when lying down or may be worse in the morning hours (episodes of reflux are more common at night).
10. Ear pain.
11. Sensation of choking or inability to "catch your breath".
12. Excess salivation.
13. "Too much phlegm".

TREATMENT

The treatment varies from person to person, but the general principles are the same: to try to decrease the amount of acid produced by the stomach and to keep the acid produced in the stomach out of the esophagus and throat.

1. The main treatment is to raise the head of the bed four to six inches. This is easily accomplished by placing one or two bricks under the posts of the headboard, or if you can't raise the head of your bed, use a foam wedge (you can purchase these at most home-health stores) to raise your upper torso. Sleeping on two pillows does not raise the torso, it usually only raises your head.
2. All types of caffeine should be avoided; this includes caffeinated coffee, tea, soft drink and all chocolate.
3. Also avoid:
 - a. Aspirin and aspirin-containing products such as Anacin, Excedrin, Alka-Seltzer, etc. If you must take aspirin every day, use a "coated" aspirin.
 - b. Spicy food.
 - c. Alcohol.
 - d. High-fat meals.
 - e. Peppermint, spearmint, cinnamon, garlic, and onions.
4. Any form of tobacco can worsen Laryngopharyngeal Reflux.
5. Recent weight gain may worsen Laryngopharyngeal Reflux.
6. To reduce the amount of acid produced in the stomach before going to bed, one should not eat a meal within two hours of retiring and the meal before going to bed should be smaller than the midday meal.
7. An antacid, such as Mylanta, Maalox, Gelusil, etc., may be taken after each meal with a double dose at bedtime.
8. Occasionally, a medication may be prescribed by your doctor to reduce the amount of acid produced by the stomach or to improve the tightness of the valve between the stomach and esophagus.
9. Sometimes x-rays or examination of the esophagus and stomach with a scope are necessary to further evaluate the problem and determine therapy.