

YOUR HEALTH MATTERS! GUT HEALTH (PART 1) – HEARTBURN & REFLUX

by Janesha Rangi (UWA Pharmacy Student)

What is Heartburn?

Heartburn, or reflux, occurs when stomach acid flows back up into the oesophagus (food pipe) which causes irritation to the inner lining of the oesophagus. Heartburn/reflux happens when the stomach's valve, which separates the stomach and oesophagus, does not close properly. Symptoms can be worse when bending down/over.

What are the Symptoms?

- Pain and discomfort in the upper body and behind the breast bone
- Fluid or food from your stomach coming into your mouth
- An acid/sour/bitter taste in your mouth
- Sudden increase in saliva (hypersalivation)
- Burping
- Dry cough (especially at midnight)

What are some risk factors? Some factors can trigger or worsen heartburn, such as:

- Some foods (spicy/ junk foods)
- Caffeinated drinks (coffee/ tea)
- Soft drinks and sodas
- Having large meals
- Eating too fast
- Anxiety/ stress
- Lying down after eating
- Physical activity soon after eating
- Certain medical conditions

Medicines and Treatments?

Some medicines are available without a prescription from a pharmacy. A pharmacist can advise and/or refer you to a doctor when necessary. You should always let your pharmacist know of your medications, medical conditions, allergies or pregnant & breastfeeding status so they can recommend the right treatment for you.

Medicines that help include:

Antacids	H ₂ -antagonists	Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works by neutralising the gastric acid in the stomach for quick relief of symptoms - Preferred if pregnant or breastfeeding - Do not take within 2 hours of medications - Avoid using for longer than 1-2 weeks - Brands: Gaviscon, Mylanta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works by reducing the amount of gastric acid produced in the stomach - Can be used 30-60 minutes before eating if reflux occurs with food/drinks - Avoid using for longer than 1-2 weeks - Brands: Zantac 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works by reducing the amount of gastric acid produced in the stomach - Used to prevent heartburn/reflux symptoms (does not provide a quick relief) → Can be used with antacids - Brands: Nexium 

Self-care & Lifestyle Tips

- Avoid or reduce consumption of trigger foods & drinks
- Eat smaller meals more often than large meals less often
- Do not rush when eating; chew slowly
- Use an extra pillow or raise the bed's head to avoid lying down flat
- Wear loose clothing around your waist

Resources:

1. Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Self-Care Fact Card: Heartburn & Indigestion
2. Pharmaceutical Society of Australia: Non-Prescription Medicines in the Pharmacy

Supervised by Angela (Pharmacist)