

## Happy Ending to Acid Problems

Have you ever had ever-present burning sensations when you eat certain foods? For some, even our traditional healthy foods such as sweet potatoes, sukuma wiki, brown bread and some not so healthy foods such as chips could also bring the same feeling. Once in a while it can feel so bad that once can actually think that one may be suffering from ulcers.

The feeling is often referred as heartburn or acid ingestion.

### **How does it feel like?**

- It is a burning sensation in the centre of your chest or the upper part of your stomach rising towards your throat
- It can last for several hours
- It is often worse after you eat, when you bend over or when you lie down.
- It can give you a sour taste in the back of your throat or mouth.
- It can be made worse by certain foods such as acidic drinks, alcohol, chocolate, fried or fatty foods, obesity, smoking and anxiety
- It is a very common condition – most people experience mild heartburn from time to time
- It is a chronic condition that often occurs and is not related to your heart.

## **Causes for heartburn**

It is caused by the flowing back i.e. reflux of the stomach contents into your esophagus the food tube from the mouth to stomach. The most common reflux is a reason for reflux is a problem with the lower esophageal sphincter [LOS]. The ring around the LOS where the esophagus joins the stomach. The LOS acts as a valve allowing food to enter your stomach contents from going back into the esophagus. Reflux can cause heartburn or other symptoms – this is called “gastro-esophageal disease GORD” swelling or injury at the lower end of your esophagus – known as “reflux esophagitis”.

## **How serious is it?**

Mild or infrequent heartburn is not serious – nearly everyone experiences heartburn at some time. One should consult a doctor if you experience frequent heart burn i.e. more than twice a wee] or troublesome heartburn, or if you have other symptoms such as pain you swallow vomiting or weight loss. Don't ignore your heartburn. Frequent or severe heartburn can mean that your esophagus is inflamed or injured and esophageal erosions or ulcers may develop. Although this may lessen the symptoms, the new lining may be a sign that a cancer may develop.

## **Here are Tips on how to manage heartburn.**

In many cases infrequent or mild heartburn can be controlled by lifestyle changes. If these changes don't help please seek medical advise.

- If you smoke make it your aim to quit
- Lose weight if necessary
- Ensure you eat a balanced diet with starches, proteins, vegetables and fruits.
- Avoid eating large meals especially just before you go to bed.

- Avoid foods that make your symptoms worse e.g. citrus juices, tomatoes, hot/spicy foods, chocolate, coffee, and alcohol.
- Avoid wearing tight clothing
- Avoid lying down until at least 2 – 3 hours have passed since your last meal.

**Some Foods that are good sources of Iron include;**

- Fresh fruits
- Fresh vegetables
- Pawpaw
- Ginger
- Garlic

**Take care of your health now and it will take care of you for a long time to come.**

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