

HEARTBURN

Heartburn is reflux of stomach acid into the esophagus, causing a burning or painful feeling in the middle of the chest. It is common in pregnancy due to the effect of pregnancy hormones to relax the digestive tract and permit the backflow of acid more easily. Also, as pregnancy advances, the enlarging uterus may press upward against the stomach and thus decrease the amount of room the stomach is able to hold only small amounts of food; heartburn occurs more easily as food in the crowded stomach is pushed back up into the esophagus.

Measures which can be tried to prevent or relieve heartburn include the following:

1. Identify any particularly-offending foods and avoid them.
2. Avoid salty, greasy, or spicy foods.
3. Eat small amounts of food frequently (rather than the usual three meals a day of regular size) to avoid overfilling of the stomach.
4. Avoid drinking liquids with meals, but rather drink liquids between meals to avoid overfilling the stomach.
5. Avoid lying down too soon after eating so that reflux of stomach contents is avoided. Usually 30 minutes is adequate.
6. When lying down, elevate the head and shoulders on pillows to avoid reflux of stomach contents.
7. Maintain good posture to allow more room in the abdomen for the stomach.
8. Avoid very cool foods since they inhibit gastric juices.
9. Drink acidophilus milk rather than regular milk. Acidophilus milk is easier to digest; heartburn may be caused or worsened by difficulty digesting food.
10. Drinking a small amount of grapefruit juice (about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) before meals may stimulate gastric juices and aid digestion of food.
11. Try drinking milk or eating ice cream if heartburn occurs. They may absorb excess acid and help relieve heartburn.
12. Yogurt and honey may bring relief.
13. Papaya enzyme may help neutralize stomach acid. It can be purchased in health food stores.
14. Apples or toast may be helpful.
15. Try an antacid such as Tums, Tempo, Roloids, Maalox, Mylanta, Gelusil, or Amphojel. DO NOT take antacid with iron pills, as the antacid will interfere with absorption of iron. DO NOT take baking soda preparations to relieve heartburn. Baking soda is high in both sodium and bicarbonate, which are potentially dangerous if more than very small amounts are consumed.