

Central Missouri Ear, Nose Throat, Sinus & Allergy, P.C.

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GASTROESOPHAGEAL RELUX PRECAUTIONS

Gastroesophageal reflux is a condition where stomach contents, including stomach acids, involuntarily regurgitate up the esophagus and from that point can cause several symptoms including, but not limited to, heartburn, sore throat, difficulty swallowing, cough, throat clearing and hoarseness. There are multiple ways to treat the reflux including prescription medications and surgery as a last resort. However, there are several things which can be done to help either prevent reflux or decrease the amount of reflux so that the symptoms will not occur.

1. Avoid eating or drinking up to three hours prior to reclining for sleep. This allows you to have an empty stomach prior to lying flat. This will subsequently decrease the pressure within the stomach and thereby decrease reflux.
2. Sleep with your head elevated above the level of your feet. The best way to accomplish this is to place the bedpost at the head of your bed on four to six inch blocks. This will give a flat but inclined surface upon which to sleep. Note that sleeping on several pillows is not a suggested alternative as it will tend to bend you at the waist and thereby increase the possibility of reflux.
3. If you are overweight, you should attempt to lose weight.
4. Avoid wearing any tight fitting clothes around the waist.
5. Caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol have all been proven to increase stomach acid production as well as decrease the stomach's ability to hold contents from refluxing. Therefore, smoking cessation programs and alcohol reduction programs will be beneficial. As well, caffeine should not be taken in more than two beverages per day.
6. Avoid chewing gum, sucking mints, eating candy, and eating excessively spicy foods. These have all been shown to increase the stomach's production of acid, thereby increasing the chance that reflux is more irritating.
7. Prilosec, Prevacid, or Nexium.

If you have been given a diagnosis of gastroesophageal reflux, following as many of these instructions as possible will decrease the likelihood that you will have continued severe symptoms due to this disease process.