



Laryngopharyngeal Reflux

What is Reflux?

Reflux is short for Laryngopharyngeal Reflux (or LPR). It refers to the backward flow of acid and digestive enzymes from the stomach up through the oesophagus and into the throat at the level of the vocal cords. Most people experience reflux at some stage in their lifetime.

What are the symptoms of reflux?

The voice box lining is extremely sensitive to stomach contents. Reflux causes redness and swelling of the larynx. This creates a sensation of irritation, mucus or a “lump” in the throat which people may mistake for post-nasal drip. Coughing and chronic throat clearing also commonly occur. Less commonly people may experience pain or difficulty swallowing

Many people with LPR **do not** experience the classic symptoms associated with GORD including heartburn, chest pain or an acidic taste in the mouth. In fact 50% of people with LPR have no other symptom except irritation in the throat and/or cough (silent reflux). Often these symptoms are worse during the day (when upright) and after certain foods (see below) which may trigger a reflux episode.

How is reflux treated?

Reflux symptoms can usually be controlled by a combination of dietary and lifestyle modifications in conjunction with medications.

Dietary modification

Certain foods are known to predispose to reflux. They do so by increasing acid production in the stomach or relaxing the valve between the oesophagus and the stomach which normally acts as a barrier to reflux. Some of the foods to avoid include:

- **Caffeine** including tea, coffee & chocolate – herbal teas are acceptable
- **Spicy foods** including chilli and curries
- **Carbonated drinks** (gas bubbles increase stomach pressure) including energy drinks
- Greasy, fatty or rich foods

Eating **acidic foods** may re-activate stomach enzymes caught in the throat from previous episodes of reflux so decreasing intake of acidic food and drinks is also advised

Lifestyle modification

- Have fewer smaller meals during the day rather than one large one
- Avoid eating within 3 hours of going to bed
- Consider raising the head of your bed so gravity can help keep stomach contents down.

Medical Treatment

There are a number of medications available to treat reflux. Often it takes some weeks before the symptoms respond to treatment.

Surgical Treatment

On rare occasions, in the presence of severe non-responsive reflux, surgery may be considered to tighten the valve between the stomach and the oesophagus.