

What's the REAL Cause of Acid Reflux?

Learn the truth about Acid Reflux and the natural methods you can use to treat it.

Click [here](#) to watch a video of Dr. Mercola talking about Acid Reflux.

It's important to understand that acid reflux is NOT a disease of too much acid being produced, but rather it's a condition related more commonly to hiatal hernia – a condition in which the acid is coming out of your stomach, where it's supposed to remain.

After food passes through your esophagus into your stomach, a muscular valve called the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) closes, preventing food or acid to move back up. Gastroesophageal reflux occurs when the LES relaxes inappropriately, allowing acid from your stomach to flow (reflux) backward into your esophagus.

Heartburn is the primary symptom of acid reflux; a burning sensation that radiates up from your stomach to your chest and throat. It's typically most bothersome at night, and tends to occur in connection with certain activities, such as:

- After eating a heavy meal
- Bending over
- Lifting
- Lying down, especially when laying on your back

Other symptoms include:

- Hoarseness
- A feeling that food is stuck in your throat
- Tightness in your throat
- Wheezing
- Asthma
- Dental problems
- Bad breath

While I was in residency training in medical school in the early 80s, an Australian physician named [Dr. Barry Marshall](#) did some pioneering work on acid reflux. He discovered that an organism called helicobacter pylori (initially called campylobacter) causes a chronic low-level inflammation of your stomach lining, and is responsible, or at least a major factor, for producing many of the symptoms of acid reflux.

There are over 16,000 articles supporting the fact that suppressing stomach acid does not treat the problem. It only treats the symptoms. And one of the explanations for this is that when you suppress the amount of acid in your stomach, you decrease your body's ability to kill the helicobacter bacteria. So it actually makes your condition worse and perpetuates the problem.

Of course now we have treatments such as antibiotics that are designed to eradicate that organism. However, I've found that it's virtually never necessary to use antibiotics, and I'll share several simple, effective strategies to eliminate the helicobacter without the use of drugs.

How to Wean Yourself Off Dangerous Acid Reflux Drugs

If you suffer with this condition, and made the unwise choice of seeing a conventional physician for it, you've likely been put on a proton pump inhibitor like [Prilosec](#) or Prevacid.

Please understand that these are **very dangerous drugs**. It's the last thing you'll want to take for this condition.

Unfortunately, proton pump inhibitors are very popular because they work quite well. However, you'll develop both tolerance and dependence on them, so you can't stop taking them without suffering serious repercussions.

You should NEVER stop taking proton pump inhibitors cold turkey. You have to wean yourself off them gradually or else you'll experience a severe rebound of your symptoms, and the problem may end up being worse than before you started taking the medication.

Ideally, you'll want to get a lower dose than you're on now, and then gradually decrease your dose. Once you get down to the lowest dose of the proton pump inhibitor, you can start substituting with an over-the-counter H2 blocker like Tagamet, Cimetidine, Zantac, or Ranitidine. Then gradually wean off the H2 blocker over the next several weeks.

Safe and Effective Strategies That Can Eliminate Acid Reflux

While you wean yourself off these drugs (if you're already on one), you'll want to start implementing a lifestyle modification program that can eliminate this condition once and for all.

These strategies include:

Eliminating food triggers -- Food allergies can be a problem, so you'll want to completely eliminate items such as caffeine, alcohol, and all nicotine products.

Increasing your body's natural production of stomach acid -- Like I said earlier, acid reflux is not caused by too much acid in your stomach -- it's usually a problem with *too little* acid. One of the simplest strategies to encourage your body to make sufficient amounts of hydrochloric acid (stomach acid) is to consume enough of the raw material.

One of the simplest, most basic food items that many people neglect is a high quality sea salt (unprocessed salt).

I recommend eliminating [processed, regular table salt](#) for a lot of different reasons, all of which I've reviewed before. But an unprocessed salt like [Himalayan salt](#) -- one of the best salts on the planet -- will not only provide you with the chloride your body needs to make hydrochloric acid, it also contains over 80 trace minerals your body needs to perform optimally, biochemically.

Taking a hydrochloric acid supplement -- Another option is to take a betaine hydrochloric supplement, which is available in health food stores without prescription. You'll want to take as many as you need to get the slightest burning sensation and then decrease by one capsule. This will help your body to better digest your food, and will also help kill the helicobacter and normalize your symptoms.

Modifying your diet -- Eating large amounts of processed foods and sugars is a surefire way to exacerbate acid reflux as it will upset the bacterial balance in your stomach and intestine.

Instead, you'll want to eat a lot of vegetables, and high quality, [organic](#), biodynamic, and [locally grown foods](#). You can also supplement with a high quality probiotic or make sure you include [fermented foods](#) in your diet. This will help balance your bowel flora, which can help eliminate helicobacter naturally.

Optimizing your vitamin D levels -- As I've mentioned many times in the past, vitamin D is essential, and it's essential for this condition as well because there's likely an infectious component causing the problem. Once [your vitamin D levels](#) are optimized, you're also going to optimize your production of 200 antimicrobial peptides that will help your body eradicate *any* infections that shouldn't be there.

You'll want to make sure your vitamin D level is about 60 ng/ml, and I strongly recommend you use LabCorp, which is a high quality testing facility.

As I've discussed in many previous articles, you can increase your vitamin D levels through [appropriate amounts of sun exposure](#), or through the use of a [safe tanning bed](#).

If neither of those are available, you can take an oral vitamin D3 supplement. However, whenever you use oral vitamin D, it's imperative you get tested regularly to make sure you're not reaching toxic levels.

Implementing an exercise routine – Exercise is yet another way to improve your body's immune system, which is imperative to fight off all kinds of infections.

Related Links:

» [Dramatic Relief From Heartburn](#)

» [Non-Drug Options for GERD](#)

» [Why Inhibiting Acid Production With Prilosec and Prevacid Could Make Ulcers Worse](#)

Reference website: <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2009/04/25/News-Flash-Acid-Reflux-Caused-by-Too-Little-Acid-Not-Too-Much.aspx>