

Heartburn



Learning Objectives

At the end of the presentation students should be able to:

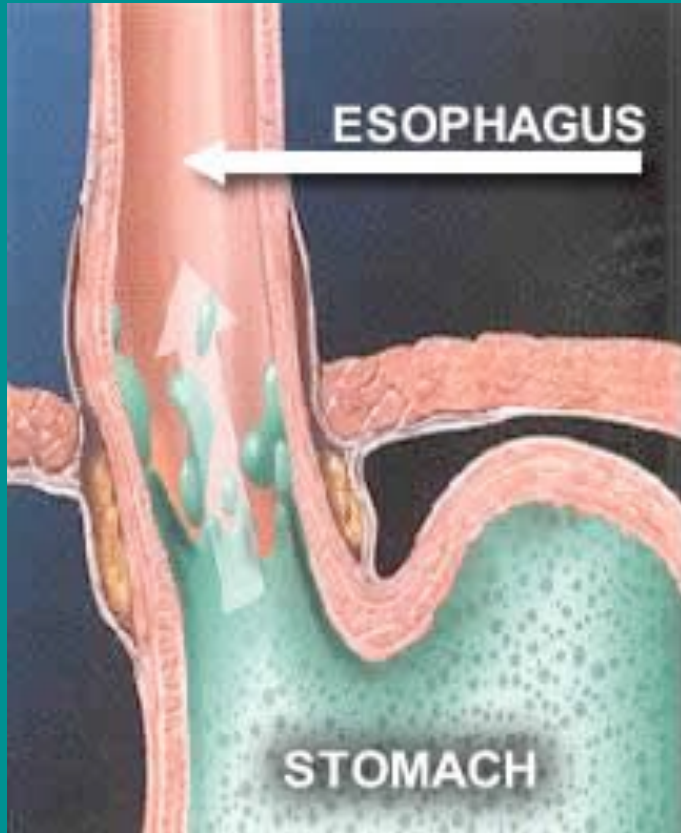
- Identify **where** heartburn occurs in the body
- Identify some **causes** of heartburn
- Identify some ways to **prevent** heartburn

Definition

- A pain behind the breast bone, described as “burning.”
- Pain can also be felt at the same level in the mid-line of the back.
- Most people suffer from heartburn at one time or another.
- It has nothing to do with the heart - it is a digestive problem.
- Heartburn is generally related to meals and posture and can often be relieved by indigestion medicines.



Cause



- Acid is present in the stomach to digest food
- Heartburn occurs when small amounts of **this acid** rise up into the gullet (esophagus-the tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach). This is called **reflux**.
- The gullet, unlike the stomach, does not have a protective lining. So when it is exposed to the acid, it can become inflamed and painful.

Prevention



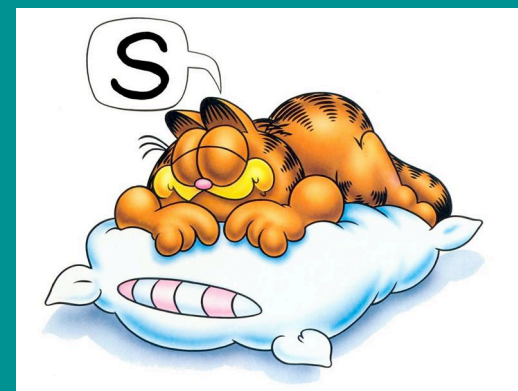
The most important and helpful aspects of treatment are those which you can do for yourself.



1. Stop Smoking – after a meal, when the stomach is full, smoking increases the chances that you will suffer from heartburn.
2. Avoid becoming overweight – Improve your eating habits by including more fruit, vegetables, and high-fiber foods in your diet. Regular exercise can also help to lose weight.

Prevention, continued

3. Diet – particular foods can make your symptoms worse. These can include: acidic fruit drinks, drinks which are too hot, alcoholic beverages (such as whiskey and brandy), or fatty and spicy meals.
4. Eat smaller portions often, then over-fill the stomach with one big meal. Eat slowly and chew well.
5. Sleeping – evening meal should digested well before you go to bed. Night-time symptoms can be reduced by raising the head of the bed on blocks by 6 inches. Gravity helps to keep the acid in the stomach where it belongs. Sleeping on the left side can also help.



Prevention, continued



5. Posture – avoid bending or stooping just after meals. Instead, bend from the knees, keeping the back straight. Meals digest better sitting in an upright chair rather than slumped in front of the television.
6. Clothing – avoid tight belts and underwear, they can increase pressure on the stomach.
7. Pregnancy – it is common for pregnant women to suffer from heartburn. Eating sensibly and keeping your weight within the recommended limits, can decrease the severity of heartburn.



Review Questions

- Heartburn deals with the heart. T / F
- What is it called when acid rises up into the gullet? _____
- Heartburn is a pain felt behind the breastbone. T / F
- The _____ does not have a protective lining.
- Which one does not prevent heartburn: (circle one)
 1. eat small portions
 2. avoid tight belts and underwear
 3. eat plenty of fatty and spicy meals
 4. sleep on the left side