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GUIDELINES FOR ESOPHAGEAL REFLUX

- All foods, except those mentioned, may be eaten.
- Avoid large meals. Smaller meals with snacks will be better tolerated.
- Avoid fried foods and other food high in fat.
- Avoid rich, sweet desserts and frosting.
- Avoid coffee, tea, cola, chocolate and decaffeinated coffee. Decaffeinated tea may be used if it is not mint flavored. Postum, Caffex and Pero may be used as coffee substitutes.
- Limit liquids with meals, including water, to ½ cup. More liquid will be tolerated with small meals which are low in fat.
- Avoid spicy foods and highly seasoned foods, especially those containing black pepper, red pepper, hot sauce, chili powder, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, allspice and cinnamon.
- Avoid gassy vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, green pepper, garlic, onions and radishes.
- Avoid orange juice, grapefruit juice, tomato juice, pineapple juice and for some individuals, cranberry juice. The fruits of these juices are usually well tolerated in small quantities.
- Avoid nuts, popcorn, and excessive amounts of high fiber goods.
- Avoid doughnuts and sweet rolls and other baked products containing mace.
- Avoid carbonated beverages to “defizz” for about 20 minutes before drinking. Limit carbonated beverages to ½ cup with meal and 1 cup at time between meals. Avoid ginger-ale.
- Do not lie down immediately after eating or drinking; wait 1 hour after drinking liquids, 2 hours after and light snack, and 4 hours after a meal.
- Do not use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (including Advil, ibuprofen, Medipren, Nuprin) and aspirin and its coated or buffered forms. Use instead, a pain medication containing acetaminophen such as Tylenol, Datril or Anacin 3.
- Avoid lifting, bending, stooping, exercising, moving heavy furniture, etc., for 1-2 hours after meals. If these activities cannot be avoided, then reduce the size of the meals.
- Avoid smoking, especially after meals.
- Achieve ideal body weights.
- Elevate the head of the bed with 6” blocks under the headboard. Do not sleep on a water bed. Some patients attempt to do the same thing with pillows or wedges, but the measures are not effective in preventing reflux.
- While mentioned last, elevating the head of the bed is the more important and most effective therapeutic change and should be continued for at least the first 4-6 weeks. Thereafter, you may try reducing the level of elevation. If symptoms recur, however, elevation should be continued for several weeks.

Initially, all guidelines must be followed in order to break the cycle of esophageal reflux and pain. After several weeks, the diet may be liberalized slightly. Keep in mind, however, a return to former eating habits will lead to return of esophageal problems.

Check with your doctor for his recommendation if symptoms continue.