



# Reflux Esophagitis

*For Pulmonary Clinic patients*

This handout gives helpful tips for patients who need help reducing or preventing reflux.

## What is reflux esophagitis?

*Reflux esophagitis*, also called *gastroesophageal reflux disease* (GERD) occurs when stomach contents (food or liquid, and stomach acid) leak from the stomach up into the *esophagus* (the tube that goes from the mouth to the stomach). This can irritate the esophagus, causing heartburn and other symptoms.

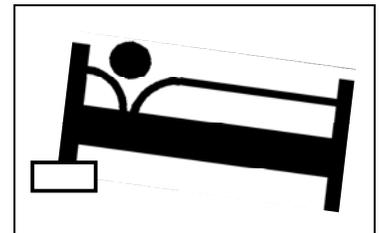
Reflux esophagitis is common in people who have pulmonary symptoms. Chronic coughing creates pressure in the stomach. This pressure may make symptoms of reflux esophagitis worse.

## Helpful Tips

You may find some or all of these tips helpful in reducing or preventing reflux. Ask your doctor which of these may help you the most.

### *Raise the Head of Your Bed*

- Place wood blocks or bricks under the legs at the head of your bed to raise it 2 to 6 inches.
- Or, place a foam wedge beneath the upper half of your body.
- Do **not** use extra pillows to prop up your upper body.



Place wood blocks or bricks under the head of your bed.

### *Avoid Certain Foods and Drinks*

Avoid or limit the foods and drinks that cause your reflux symptoms. These include:

- Spicy foods
- Fatty foods
- Acidic juices such as tomato and citrus (grapefruit and orange)
- Chocolate and mints

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## Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Pulmonary Clinic:  
206-598-4615

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Pulmonary Fellow on call to be paged

For appointments, call the Medical Specialties/  
Pulmonary Clinic:  
206-598-4615

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- Coffee, tea, and soft drinks (see “Caffeine Drinks” below)
- Alcoholic beverages

### *Caffeine Drinks*

Limit coffee to 2 to 3 cups a day. It may also help to limit other beverages that contain caffeine, such as some teas and soft drinks.

### *Let Gravity Help*

- Wait for 2 hours after eating before lying down or sitting in a reclining chair.
- Avoid bending over at the waist to pick up things. Instead, keep your back straight and bend at your knees when you need to reach down.

### *Avoid Tight Clothing*

- Wear clothing that fits loosely around your waist.
- Avoid tight belts, pants, or girdles. These can increase pressure on your abdomen and cause stomach acid to back up into your esophagus.

### *Take Antacids*

Antacids can be taken at bedtime and 30 to 60 minutes after each meal, as directed by your doctor.

### *Eating Tips*

- Do not overfill your stomach.
- Eat smaller meals more often instead of 3 larger meals.

### *Maintain Your Ideal Weight*

- Extra weight puts constant pressure on your stomach and increases reflux symptoms. Losing just a small amount of weight may help.

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