



Managing Reflux

Dietary guidelines for people with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)

This handout explains dietary changes to help lessen the symptoms of reflux. Avoiding certain foods will also help keep your esophagus from becoming inflamed. These changes are recommended for people with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). On pages 2 and 3 are lists of foods that are usually tolerated and those that may cause problems.

These are guidelines only. It is best to talk about your specific dietary needs with a dietitian or diet technician.

Tips to Manage Reflux

Do:

- Sit upright when you eat and for 45 to 60 minutes after eating.
- Eat moderate amounts of food at meals. Five small meals a day are better than 3 large meals a day.
- Limit caffeine intake (coffee, tea, cola drinks, some energy drinks).
- Try problem foods in small amounts as part of a meal.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Raise the head of your bed 6 inches to 8 inches.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink, or do not drink at all.
- If you smoke, stop smoking.

Do NOT:

- Eat within 2 to 3 hours of bedtime.
- Eat chocolate if it causes symptoms.
- Eat spicy, acidic, tomato-based foods and citrus fruits and fruit juices if they cause pain or symptoms.
- Exercise right after eating.
- Wear clothing that is tight around your stomach.

Guidelines for Food Choices to Manage Reflux

Foods	Usually Tolerated	May Cause Problems
Milk and milk products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat-free or low-fat buttermilk, yogurt, and milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole milk, chocolate milk, and other drinks made with chocolate or whole milk or cream
Bread and cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain bread, cereals, rolls, crackers • Pancakes, waffles, biscuits, French toast, and muffins made with low-fat ingredients • Bagels • Corn tortillas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breads and cereals prepared with high-fat ingredients such as croissants, biscuits, doughnuts, sweet rolls, muffins, granola
Meats and meat substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean meat • Poultry (without skin) • Fish (fresh or water-packed) • Lean pork • Shellfish • Low-fat luncheon meats, wieners, cheeses • Tofu • Dried beans and peas (includes fat-free refried beans) • Eggs (cooked without fat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried meat, poultry, fish or eggs • Regular luncheon meats, wieners, sausages • Refried beans • Bacon
Potatoes and potato substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked, boiled, and mashed potatoes without added fat • Plain pasta or pasta with low-fat cream sauces • Rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French-fries, potato chips • Pasta with cream sauces or tomato-based sauces
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain fresh, frozen, and canned prepared without fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried or creamed • Tomatoes and tomato products • Onions • Vegetable juices
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits as tolerated • Juices, EXCEPT citrus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orange, lemon, tangerine, pineapple, grapefruit, citrus drinks or juices
Soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat-free broths • Homemade soups with lean meat, vegetables, (except tomatoes) and low-fat milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular cream soups and tomato-based soups
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No fat or low-fat dressings and mayonnaise • Nonfat liquid or powdered cream substitutes, nonfat or reduced-fat sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gravies, meat drippings, bacon grease • Heavy cream, butter, margarine, vegetable oils • Regular sour cream, cream cheeses • Nuts

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.

Your Dietitian or Diet Technician:

Foods	Usually Tolerated	May Cause Problems
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angelfood cake, sponge cake, low-fat cookies • Gelatin • Fruit-based desserts • Sherbet, fruit ice, reduced-fat ice cream • Puddings or custard (except chocolate-flavored) made with low-fat milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other cakes, pies, cookies • Ice cream • Any desserts containing chocolate
Sweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugar, honey, maple syrup, molasses • Jam, jelly • Hard candy • Marshmallows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coconut • Cream-filled candies • Nuts • Chocolate
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt, pepper • As tolerated: garlic, oregano, sage, other spices and herbs • Decaffeinated coffee and tea • Non-mint tea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spices and herbs in tomato-based sauces • Spearmint, peppermint • Chili and jalapeno peppers • Vinegar • Carbonated beverages • Mint tea • Regular coffee • Alcoholic beverages