

## Acid Reflux

Approximately 61 million Americans have heartburn, a common symptom of acid reflux disease. Heartburn is a burning feeling in the lower chest and does not affect the heart.

Heartburn is also known as acid reflux disease and is a common symptom of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). It usually occurs after eating a big meal or while lying down. The feeling can last for a few minutes or a few hours. When you eat food, it enters the mouth and passes through the esophagus before entering the stomach. In the stomach, acid mixes with the foods you eat in order to digest it. As food passes through the esophagus into the stomach, there is a gate at the end of the esophagus (flap like muscle called the lower esophageal sphincter-LES) that keeps acid in the stomach from washing up into the esophagus. If this gate (LES) does not close properly it allows acid to enter the esophagus and irritate the tissues in the esophagus, often leading to the feeling of heartburn. The most common symptom of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is heartburn. Heartburn is usually experienced as a burning sensation behind the breastbone that may rise all the way to the face. Discomfort is caused by acid reflux from the stomach because the lower esophageal sphincter isn't working properly. Heartburn may accompany regurgitation or excessive salvia. Complications include esophageal stricture, ulceration and Barrett's esophagus; a pre-cancerous may cause pain during swallowing and bleeding. Other symptoms of GERD may include nausea; burping; coughing; and respiratory conditions such as asthma, pneumonia and chronic bronchitis. Physicians may conduct diagnostic tests such as x-rays, esophagoscopy,

and a visual exam with flexible tube. Other tests include measuring the lower esophageal sphincter, biopsies and acidity tests. If you or a client suspects GERD, it is important to get a thorough diagnosis to rule out complications, respiratory disease and heart conditions. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), heartburn is usually caused by emotional upset and eating the wrong foods. Reflux is seen as rebellious Qi that is rising where it should be sinking. Luckily, there are several herbal remedies that can be used in addition to Acupuncture treatment. Acupuncture removes energy blockage and will provide deep relaxation which helps calm the mind. The length, number or frequency of treatments will vary. Typical treatments last from five to 30 minutes, with the patient being treated one or two times a week. Some symptoms are relieved after the first treatment, while more severe or chronic ailments often require multiple treatments. The style of acupuncture that your acupuncturist has been trained in will play a role in length of treatment, number points used and frequency of visits.

**What can we do to feel better?**

Avoid food and beverages that make your heartburn worse. Foods such as chocolate, coffee, peppermint, greasy or spicy foods, tomato products, and alcoholic beverages can sometimes be triggers for some people. Stop smoking. Tobacco inhibits salvia, which is the body's major buffer. Tobacco may also stimulate stomach acid and relax the gate that prevents acid from backing up into the esophagus. Maintain ideal weight. Do not eat 2-3 hours before sleep.