

Heartburn: The Burning Sensation

Heartburn, also called pyrosis, is a condition wherein there is a painful or burning sensation in the esophagus, just below the breastbone because of gastric acid regurgitation. The pain is described to rise to the chest and may even radiate to the neck, throat, or angle of the jaw. The pain worsens when you bend over, lie down, or eat. It may also be more frequent or worse in the evenings.

A common misconception is that heartburn affects the heart. The truth of the matter is, this medical condition is not, in any way, related to the heart. One reason why it was called heartburn is because the pain is usually felt on the breastbone where the heart is situated. Another reason is because the hydrochloric acid from the stomach goes back up to the esophagus because of a problem with the cardiac sphincter, a valve in the stomach, which does not have anything to do with the heart.

What causes heartburn?

To understand what causes heartburn, one must understand how the upper digestive tract works. When you swallow, the cardiac sphincter relaxes to let foods and liquids into the stomach. Then it closes again to prevent food from coming back up. If the cardiac valve weakens or relaxes abnormally, gastric acid may flow back up to the esophagus, causing a burning sensation, or heartburn.

Here are factors that may trigger or make heartburn worse:

- o Food. (fatty foods, spicy foods, chocolate, caffeine, onions, tomato sauce, carbonated drinks, and mint.)
- o Alcoholic beverages.
- o Large meals.
- o Lying down too soon after eating.
- o Medications. (certain sedatives, antidepressants and calcium channel blockers for high blood pressure)
- o Cigarette smoking.
- o Stress and fatigue.
- o Medical condition. (hiatal hernia)

What medical complications may arise from leaving heartburn untreated?

Most heartburn attacks are occasional. However, if your heartburn becomes severe or chronic, your body may already be telling you that you have gastroesophageal reflux disorder (GERD). People might mistake it as just a prolonged case of acid reflux. Although heartburn is a symptom for GERD, in this case stomach acid, and occasionally bile flows back into the esophagus, causing inflammation and irritation of the esophagus. Continued irritation may cause narrowing of the esophagus, ulceration of the esophagus, and a slightly increased risk of developing esophageal cancer.

How is heartburn treated?

Treatment for mild heartburn is more concentrated on providing relief from the symptom. The use of the following medications is advised:

- o Antacids. These medications neutralize digestive acid and provide quick relief for the burning pain.
- o H2 receptor blockers. These medications reduce acid production instead of neutralizing the gastric juices.
- o Proton pump inhibitors. These medications block acid production to allow enough time for esophageal tissue healing.

For cases of persistent and prolonged heartburn that may have already developed into GERD, prescription-strength medications are required as medical treatment, and for severe cases of GERD, surgery.

Preventive tips

A simple lifestyle change may help prevent experiencing the pains of heartburn over and over. Here are some quick tips to reduce the risk of

experiencing heartburn.

- o Watch your weight. Excess pounds mean added pressure to the abdomen, pushing up the stomach and causing acid reflux back up to the esophagus.
- o Eat smaller meals. Meals in smaller portions reduce pressure on the cardiac sphincter, and it helps prevent the valve from opening and acid from going back into the esophagus.
- o Eliminate triggers. Take note of the food that trigger your heartburn and try to stay away from them.
- o Avoid lying down immediately after a meal. Leave a window of two to three hours after eating before going to bed.
- o Avoid smoking. Ingesting air during smoking aggravates belching and, in turn, acid reflux.

Heartburn isn't as simple as it sounds, so don't take it lightly. Your pain tolerance may tell you it's nothing but a bad case of belching, but it may lead to further medical complications if you leave it unchecked. You are in-charge of your own body, so keep close watch and maintain a healthy life.

About the Author

DrugstoreTM.com is a reputable online drug store. From sexual health to a woman's health, sleeping aids to weight loss pills, our online pharmacy offers convenient customer access to various health medicines, including an array of health products and Medicare prescription drugs. [Buy Soma](#) | [Buy Tramadol](#)

Source: <http://www.tntarticles.com>