

EAR, NOSE & THROAT

Stay safe against acidic ailments

Highly acidic gastric juice that backs up the throat can wreak havoc in its path, and this is the main cause of concern in acid reflux.



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When we eat, food travels down from our oesophagus into our stomach. Under normal circumstances, the cells in our stomach lining make acid and other chemicals which help to digest food.

Food and acid in our stomach do not move in opposite directions of each other due to the presence of sphincters sited at both ends of our oesophagus – one from the throat and the other into the stomach. Reflux happens when the sphincters do not function properly, allowing acid from the stomach to enter our oesophagus.


There are two main types of reflux conditions: gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), where content backs up the oesophagus; and laryngopharyngeal reflux disease (LPRD), where the reflux reaches the back of the throat.

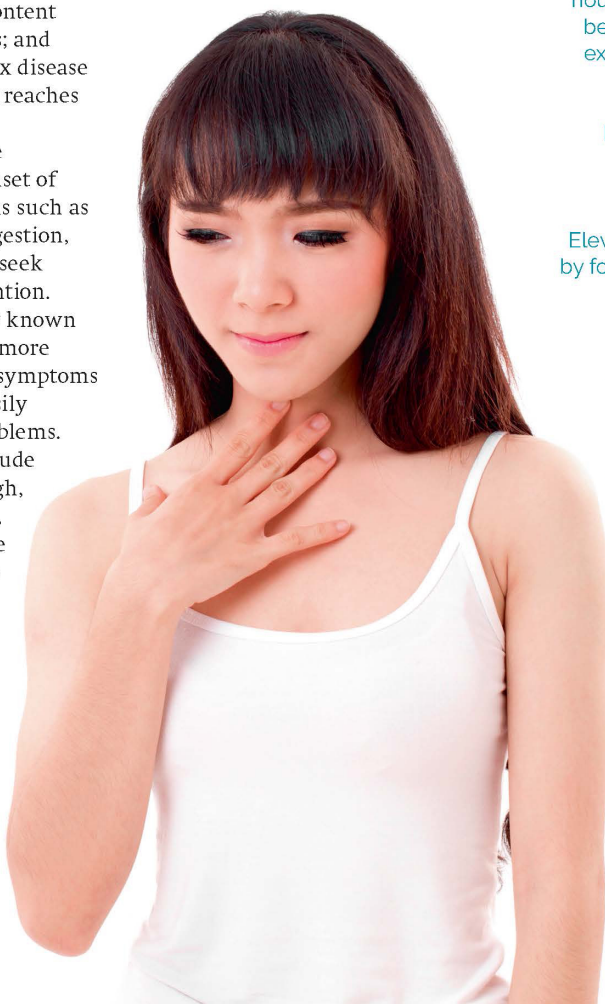
People with GERD are usually alerted by the onset of uncomfortable symptoms such as heartburn and acid indigestion, which will lead them to seek immediate medical attention.

LPRD, also commonly known as silent reflux, is much more difficult to diagnose. Its symptoms are vague and can be easily confused with other problems. Common symptoms include hoarseness, chronic cough, frequent throat clearing, pain or discomfort in the throat, feeling of a lump in the throat, problems swallowing, a bad or bitter taste on waking up, shortness of breath, referred ear pain and phlegm in the throat.

Because a diagnosis of LPRD is difficult, a skilled ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist

is usually needed to identify the condition. Besides the symptoms listed above, there are additional visible telltale signs in the voice box during the onset of LPRD. They are red irritated arytenoid (structure at the back of the vocal fold) or larynx (voice box), small laryngeal ulcers, swelling of the vocal folds, granuloma in the larynx and thick mucus from the voice box.

To keep reflux in check, accurate diagnosis is essential – and even though there are many medications to control acid reflux, it is equally important to rest and take good care of the throat for a quick recovery. 



STEPS TO REDUCE LIKELIHOOD OF LPRD

STRESS

Make time for relaxing activities.

FOOD

Notice how your body reacts to various foods and know which ones cause reflux, e.g. spicy, acidic or tomato-based foods, acidic juices and fruits, fast food, fatty foods, caffeinated beverages and chocolate.

MEALTIMES

Eat in moderation and have your last meal at least three hours before bedtime. Avoid bedtime snacks and don't exercise right after eating.

WEIGHT

Being overweight can increase reflux.

NIGHT REFLUX

Elevate the head of your bed by four to six inches to achieve a 10-degree slant.

CLOTHING

Avoid tight belts and restrictive clothing.

SMOKING

Stop smoking as it is a well-known cause of reflux.