

**SPECIAL REPORT**

## **HERBAL REMEDIES FOR ACID REFLUX**



**NATURALLY RELIEVE  
HEARTBURN & INDIGESTION**

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# Introduction

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Gastroesophageal reflux disease is the medical term for what we know as acid reflux. Acid reflux occurs when the stomach releases its liquid back into the esophagus, causing inflammation and damage to the esophageal lining. The regurgitated acid most often consists of a few compounds: acid, bile, and pepsin. Stomach acid is used in the digestion of food and can be a major irritant to the esophagus due to its tendency to damage tissues. Bile is created in the liver and may back up into the stomach, causing it to be released. Pepsin, the last common compound, is actually an enzyme which helps to kick-start the stomach into breaking down proteins.

Once afflicted with acid reflux, a person will generally continue to face the disease for the rest of his or her life. The Esophagitis which is caused by acid reflux can also be expected to be a life-long problem. Once treatment for acid reflux has begun, a patient is usually advised to continue taking the medication for as long as they want to prevent the disease from affecting them.

It may surprise you to know that research has shown most people experience a minor form of regurgitation on a fairly frequent basis. However, those afflicted with acid reflux have a higher acid content in the liquid brought into the esophagus than the liquids of a person who doesn't have the disease. The fluid also often stays in the esophagus for longer periods of time.

Our bodies do the best they can to prevent acid reflux from actually causing harm. During hours in which a person is awake, the reflux is usually remedied by a simple swallow. Also, the saliva generated in our salivary glands contains bicarbonate, which is a neutralizing agent to the effects of acid. When we sleep, however, we are usually horizontal, causing acid to rest in the esophagus for extended periods of time, which often leads to greater damage.

Acid reflux often leads to heartburn, which is pretty much the defining characteristic and symptom of reflux. The pain of acid reflux can actually be quite similar to angina, which is a serious heart condition. For that reason, you should go to a doctor if you experience heavy heartburn.

Acid reflux is most commonly experienced after eating a meal. People who are afflicted with acid reflux may also experience a complete regurgitation of liquid, leaving a nasty taste in their mouth and esophageal damage. Nausea can also occur in some people with reflux, and it may be accompanied by full-out vomiting.

Heartburn and nausea are the two most common reasons people discover that they are afflicted with reflux. If either of the symptoms sounds similar to your personal experience, it's well worth your time to sit down with a health care professional to investigate what can be done to eliminate the problem.

## Acid Reflux Facts

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The more you know about a disease, the more you can minimize its effects on your health. Acid reflux is present in at least thirty five percent of all overweight people and is also a problem for a vast demographic. The more you know about acid reflux, the better chance you have at not triggering its effects. In this section, I want to share some facts and information that are pertinent to discussion of acid reflux.

- ➔ More than sixty million Americans experience heartburn due to acid reflux at least once per month. That represents roughly one fifth of the entire American population! Also, approximately twenty five million Americans, or one twelfth of the total American population experience the harmful effects of heartburn/acid reflux on an every day basis.
- ➔ Acid reflux can be more harmful to your mental health than you may realize. Roughly eighty percent of all acid reflux sufferers experience symptoms of the disease at night, with about seventy five percent of all acid reflux cases waking the afflicted person due to the heartburn. This can cause many problems during the day, including increased irritability, lack of proper concentration, and an increased risk of being in an accident involving an automobile.
- ➔ While heartburn is technically incurable, there are things that you can do to help offset the chance of you getting this disease. If you worry that you're at risk for an acid reflux condition, it's important to

review the types of foods you're eating and change your habits to reduce the number of acid-creating foods you ingest.

➔ Smoking and alcohol usage can contribute to an acid reflux problem. When you smoke, the acidity in your stomach is increased, which can cause acid reflux that is already occurring to be more damaging to the esophagus. Also, nicotine is known to relax the lower esophageal sphincter muscle, which, when operating incorrectly, is one of the leading causes of an acid reflux condition. Alcohol performs much of the same process on the lower esophageal sphincter, causing it to relax and allowing reflux to creep into the esophagus.

➔ While acid reflux is a disease that can affect anybody, there are some demographics which face a higher risk of developing it. Overweight people put pressure on their stomach while sleeping due to the weight of the abdomen, and this can weaken the lower esophageal sphincter to a point where acid reflux occurs. This same risk also occurs in pregnant women; the additional weight of the baby can put a lot of added pressure on the stomach. The elderly also need to watch their lifestyle habits to ensure that they do not become afflicted with acid reflux.

➔ When acid reflux is left untreated, it can lead to many serious consequences. Due to the fact that acid is continuously in the throat, many problems can arise, including Barrett's esophagus, erosive esophagitis, esophageal strictures, and in the most extreme cases, esophageal cancer.

## Herbal Treatments

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More and more people are turning to alternative medicine in search of a solution for their health issues. While alternative medicine spans everything from massage to hypnotism to yoga, most people end up trying herbal treatments.

Aside from the claims that herbal treatments are effective, many people believe that unlike the synthetic medicines manufactured by large pharmaceutical corporations, herbs come without side effects. This isn't

true. In fact, herbs can have very dangerous side effects. For this reason, it's always smart to check with your physician before adding herbs to your diet, especially if you're taking any other medications.

Now, in relation to acid reflux, many people stop taking over the counter or prescription drugs after experiencing unpleasant side effects. According to studies, some antacids interfere with the body's absorption of vitamin and calcium. In some instances, antacids affect digestive activities by shutting down stomach secretions thus relieving the sufferers temporarily but not really curing the problem. In addition, long-term use of antacids can lead to constipation.

Different people also have different reactions to drugs. Some medications will relieve heartburn in some people but may not have the same effect in others. This results in people trying one brand of antacid after another in order to find something that works, which exposes them to greater complications.

These struggles to find a workable solution often lead sufferers to search out alternative solutions such as herbal treatments. A single type of herbal tea or a single herbal capsule appears to many to be an excellent alternative to what hasn't been working. In the same vein, sufferers come to believe that the fewer medications they take, the less chance they have of exposing themselves to toxins.

Another reason people shift to alternative medicines for their acid reflux is that antacids use sodium bicarbonate, aluminum hydroxide, magnesium hydroxide, calcium carbonate, aluminum phosphate, or a combination of these substances to neutralize stomach acid. Scientifically, these have inhibiting effects on the functions of the human anatomy.

For instance, hydrochloric acid (which is associated with food digestion and the absorption of necessary nutrients and vitamins) becomes neutralized. When hydrochloric acid is neutralized, the stomach produces even more acid to compensate for what's been lost. You see, instead of curing the problem, we create another problem. Acid rebound, the term used for this condition, is a common result when the stomach produces additional acids to replenish those that have been neutralized.

On the other hand, although herbal medications have rarely undergone the scientific scrutiny of more traditional medicines, people often place their trust in what's perceived as a more natural solution. They're often believed to strengthen the body's immune system. In the case of acid

reflux, herbal treatments are believed to strengthen the digestive system, which then prevents recurrences of the acid reflux.

Herbal treatments come in varied forms, most commonly in the form of tea, juice, capsules and food supplements. They are promoted as natural and safe. Accordingly, most of these herbal medicines should be able to be taken without the worry of an overdose or side effects. However, that isn't always the case. Once again, if you intend to take herbs, please first consult your physician. Certain herbs do not mix well with certain prescribed medications.

## Specific Remedies For Acid Reflux

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As science discovers new ways to treat acid reflux, tradition has come up with several effective herbal remedies. These remedies are natural and commonly available in most households. Not only are they affordable, but with homemade herbal remedies, the psychological stress of being a "patient" is mitigated. So let's take a look at some your options ...

### Herbal Tea

Herbal tea is one of the better-known herbal remedies for acid reflux and the associated heartburn. It helps reduce the amount of acid in the stomach. The ingredients consist of aniseed, peppermint and lavender. Aniseed helps with digestive conditions. The ash-colored anise called green anise, European anise or sweet anise is the proper choice. Peppermint helps with digestion, stomach distension, cramps, ulcers, and gas. Lavender is effective at reducing the acid in the stomach.

Here's how you can make it: mix equal quantities of all the three herbs. Boil two and a half cups water and pour them over a teaspoon of the mixture. Let the tea sit for approximately five minutes. Then strain the tea and add a bit of honey (optional). Drink up to 8 oz in the morning and the same in the evening for relieving acid reflux.

### Cinnamon

Besides its role in controlling flu and cold, cinnamon is an effective antiseptic and a trusted antacid. To use it for settling an acidic stomach

and heartburn, toast and butter some raisin bread and spread some cinnamon along with a little cardamom on it. Chew the bread slowly and thoroughly before swallowing.

### **Pineapples**

Pineapples, one of the most cherished fruits, provide one of the most effective herbal remedies for acid reflux. Pineapples are rich in enzymes, especially in Bromelain, which reduce protein. These enzymes facilitate digestion, reduce the inflammation, and aid healing. Fresh pineapple juice is rich in these enzymes.

### **Indian Gooseberry**

Research has shown Indian gooseberry to significantly reduce acid secretion. You can eat this herb raw, though it's more commonly used in the form of tea. While there are no side effects, it's wise to use Indian Gooseberry in moderation, since it can serve as a laxative with overuse.

### **Grapefruit**

The skin of organic grapefruit is also a good herbal remedy for acid reflux. To use this natural medicine, grate the whole of the outer skin of an organic grapefruit. Dry the skins on a flat dish, leaving them until they become crinkly dry. Store these dry skins in a glass jar. In case of inflammation or heartburn, chew a bit of these skins well and swallow them. Judge for yourself as to how much you need to soothe your stomach's condition.

### **Black Pepper**

Black pepper stimulates digestion. It's easy to add to recipes for additional flavoring and generally no more than a teaspoon is necessary for effectiveness.

### **Chicory Root Tea**

Chicory is one of the bitter herbs, containing endive and escarole. Boil one and a half cups of chicory root for five to ten minutes. After it cools down, drink this tea to relieve acid reflux or heartburn.



## Orange Peel Extract

Researchers believe orange peel extract aids the movement of food through the esophagus to the stomach, reducing the potential for heartburn to develop. 1,000 mg of orange peel extract taken every other day for 20 days is the most common dosage.

## Ginger Root

Researchers believe ginger root helps absorb stomach acid. In addition, it calms nerves, which can help minimize heartburn or an upset stomach due to stress.

## Liquorice

Liquorice acts like an antacid and is sometimes used for constipation as well. It comes in a powder form that can be used as a tea. Three teaspoons of powdered liquorice is the recommended daily limit. Too much liquorice can create side effects such as headaches and high blood pressure.

# Additional Teas

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Tea has been used for thousands of years to soothe and ease a variety of health problems. In fact, tea is the most consumed beverage in the world, aside from water. Herbal teas have also proven to be a good choice for those searching for a natural heartburn herbal remedy.

Black, green and red teas contain polyphenols which is an antioxidant that helps to protect our body from free radical damage. The polyphenols found in tea have been shown to provide anti-cancer properties through numerous studies. Additionally, these same studies have suggested that drinking several cups of tea each day may also reduce the risk of gastric and esophageal cancers.

But not all teas are created equal. The leaves from black, green and red teas come from a warm-weather evergreen tree known as *Camellia sinensis*. However, what we consider *herbal teas* do not come from this tree at all. In fact, herbal teas aren't really teas but are infusions called "tisane" that are made from various herbs, flowers, roots, and other parts of some plants. Tisane does not

contain as much polyphenols as true tea does, although they can be very beneficial in other ways.

When looking at how to get rid of heartburn, you may find some "herbal teas" are more advantageous in regards to easing heartburn symptoms, acid reflux and other gastrointestinal disorders, than others. Unfortunately, some teas may aggravate these conditions rather than relieve them, so choose your herbal tea remedy wisely.

So, if you are looking for a way to relieve heartburn symptoms or other problems associated with digestive disorders, such as GERD, here are a few herbal teas you may want to consider trying:

### **Chamomile Tea**

This is a very popular herbal tea used to treat a variety of health concerns such as indigestion, heartburn, anxiety, PMS, sleep disturbances and easing anxiety. It also helps to relieve the inflamed or irritated mucus membranes of the digestive tract (good for acid reflux sufferers) and helps to promote normal digestion. Used topically, it can also promote the healing of minor skin irritations and scrapes. However, since chamomile is found in the ragweed family, it could cause a reaction to anyone who has allergies to ragweed.

### **Marshmallow Tea**

No, not the big fluffy things you roast over the fire. In this case, it is the root that is used in herbal medicinal products. When taken internally, such as in a tea, marshmallow is known to ease bladder infections, and coat and soothe the gastrointestinal tract, sore throats, ease respiratory problems and promote healing of the urinary tract. It can also be purchased as a topical formula for use on burns, scrapes and inflammatory skin disorders.

### **Peppermint Tea**

The mint leaves are used to brew a delightfully refreshing herbal tea that contains no caffeine. However, there are conflicting reports on whether to use peppermint in any form when suffering from heartburn and/or acid reflux.

The oil within the peppermint helps to stimulate the flow of bile to the stomach and relieve gas pains, calm heartburn, and settle an upset stomach and nausea. On the other hand, studies have also indicated that drinking peppermint, spearmint or other strongly spiced teas actually causes the LES to relax even more, resulting in additional acid reflux.

Since the reports are conflicting on how effective peppermint tea may be in aiding heartburn relief, you may just wish to try it for yourself and see which group you fall into.

## Conclusion

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Though herbs can be very effective at reducing incidences of acid reflex, and though they have a reputation for being natural and safe, you still need to use caution. Herbs can interact with other herbs, as well as with prescribed medications. Always consult with your physician before introducing herbs into your diet.